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PERFECT

#19



How far will Lisa go to be perfect?

Beth Cruise

PICTURE PERFECT

The Complete Guide to the Art of Photography

by John Johnson

with illustrations by John Johnson

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PICTURE PERFECT

by Beth Cruise

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**To everyone who isn't
quite perfect**

Chapter 1



Zack Morris yanked open the door of his locker and winced when the hinges gave a rusty squeal of complaint. Inside, the locker was the usual mess. The only pleasing sight was the picture of Kelly Kapowski taped to the back of the door. Her shining dark brown hair, bright blue eyes, and gorgeous smile could brighten his outlook any day.

Unless that day was Monday, of course. Zack sighed loudly and fished under the pile of dirty gym clothes for the book he needed for his first class. The edge of a discarded piece of paper nicked his finger, making Zack jerk his hand back quickly.

"Ouch!" Yep, it was certainly Monday, he thought as he watched a drop of blood well from the stinging paper cut.

Zack fumbled under the clothes again, this time managing to pull the textbook free without getting another injury. The finger-hungry sheet of paper floated out of the locker to rest on the floor.

The sight of it made Zack's day suddenly worse because he recognized it as the appointment form for school pictures. The deadline for turning the form in to Mr. Belding, the principal at Bayside High School, had passed a week ago. That meant he wouldn't have any pictures taken this year.

So, no problem. School pictures never caught his best side or the brilliance of his dashing smile or the right shade of gold in his carefully styled hair. All he had to do was have pictures taken someplace else. No sweat.

Or so he thought until he overheard a couple of girls two lockers down.

"I'm so worried that I'll look really gross when they take my school photographs," Vivian Mahoney told Daisy Tyler. "These are our senior pictures, after all. They'll be in the yearbook, and when we go to class reunions in the future, these are the pictures everyone will remember."

Uh-oh. She was right, Zack thought. He couldn't miss having his picture taken along with the rest of his class. Senior pictures weren't regular school pictures. They were special.

Which meant he was in megatrouble.

Unless . . .

"Oh, Zack!" Kelly cried a bit breathlessly as she rushed up to him. "You've got to see what Mitch sent me!"

Zack grimaced at the mention of Mitch Tobias. Kelly had met Mitch on a school trip to New York. He'd been just a cab driver then. Now he was a hot-shot movie star.

For Kelly's sake, Zack tried to look interested.

"Free tickets to his next movie?" he asked.

"No, silly." Kelly shoved her pile of schoolbooks into Zack's arms, then pulled a large, folded sheet of glossy paper from her oversize purse. "He sent this!" She unfolded a poster advertising a movie. "Isn't it great?" Kelly gushed happily.

Great wasn't exactly the word Zack would have used. There was Mitch Tobias, larger than life, his dark hair tousled attractively, his electric blue eyes sparkling, his rugged features . . .

"Ooohhh!" Vivian sighed, materializing suddenly at Zack's shoulder.

Zack found he was now surrounded by a crowd of Bayside girls. The only trouble was, they weren't looking at him. Their eyes were glued to Kelly's poster.

"Mitch is so dreamy," Vivian murmured longingly.

"I saw his last movie six times," Daisy confessed, "and I melted in my seat each time he smiled."

"Oh, me, too," Kelly said. "And he's so nice in person."

The girls pressed closer, pushing Zack away from his locker. "Is Mitch supertall?" Daisy asked.

"Over six feet," Kelly answered.

"Are his eyes really that blue?"

"Bluer."

"Oh, look, he autographed the poster!"

There was a collective squeal from the girls.

Zack figured it was time to make his presence known. "The babe on the poster isn't bad, either," he said.

Kelly wrinkled her nose. "You really like Nisa Connor? I don't think much of her acting."

Zack wished he'd kept his mouth shut. "Uh..."

"She's so gorgeous, nobody probably cares that she can't act," Vivian said. "I'd give anything to have hair that shade of red."

"I'll bet her eyes aren't really that color. I mean, have you ever seen anyone else with blue-green eyes?" Daisy asked.

"And is that her real nose or one she bought from a plastic surgeon?" Melissa Alden added.

"Well, I heard that..." The girls all got into a huddle, whispering furiously.

Zack edged farther away from his locker. Kelly's books were still in his arms. The senior pictures appointment form dangled in his hand.

"Don't tell me you're actually studying, Zack Morris!" Lisa Turtle demanded, pausing at his side. Lisa had been one of his best friends ever since

kindergarten. "What's the world coming to?"

Zack grinned and dumped Kelly's books on top of the hall trash container. "You're just the one I want to see, Lisa. It's about these school pictures." He waved the appointment form at her.

"Oh no. Not you, too!" she cried.

"Me, too, what?"

"I have been so busy!" Lisa said. "It's really wonderful that everyone wants my help, but I have to draw the line somewhere. I'm practically sleeping at the mall, I'm there so often."

Lisa complaining about being at the mall? It was her favorite place in the whole world!

"Between shopping trips to help seniors pick out their outfits, and consultations with hairdressers and cosmetologists to ensure perfect makeovers, I haven't been home for dinner in two weeks!" Lisa told him. "Now you want my help, too? No can do, sweetie. Besides, you always look good."

"It isn't that," Zack hastened to assure her. "I just want to know what you know about the photographer who is taking the pictures this year."

"Xavier Oppenheimer? You don't know who Xavier Oppenheimer is?" Lisa was stunned.

"Uh, no," Zack confessed.

"He's only the most famous photographer in the whole world."

It was Zack's turn to be stunned. "And he's taking school pictures here at Bayside?"

Lisa nodded. "Isn't it wonderful? Binky Grayson's father talked him into doing it when they were in some yacht race."

"So this Oppenheimer guy is coming to Bayside, huh?"

"No. Didn't you read the information they gave you on your appointment form, Zack?" Lisa demanded. "We each get time off from classes to go to Mr. Oppenheimer's studio in town."

Time away from school? Whoa! There was no way Zack Morris was missing out on this deal!

"Have you seen Kelly?" Lisa asked. "I want to find out what she's wearing for her session with Mr. Oppenheimer."

Zack nodded toward his locker, where Kelly's dark hair was barely visible in the huddle of gossiping girls. "Over there. She's got a poster of Mitch Tobias that's—"

"Of Mitch? Get out of my way, blondie," Lisa said. "This I've got to see."

"You, too, Lisa? What's the big deal?" Zack asked.

"He's a hunk, that's what," she said, and wriggled her way into the center of the crowd of girls for a look at the movie poster.

Zack sighed. "Girls. I'll never understand them."

A. C. Slater trotted down the stairs to join Zack. "They're a mystery all right. A great mystery." He

grinned, causing dimples to deepen in his cheeks. Slater was captain of both the football and wrestling teams at Bayside.

"I love a good mystery," Samuel "Screech" Powers announced, sliding to a halt near his friends. "In fact, I even have a special sleuth hat that I ordered from *Super Snoopers* magazine. With it and my trusty magnifying glass, I'll bet I can solve any mystery."

"Not this one," Zack said. "No one can figure out why girls go nuts over guys like Mitch Tobias."

"Sure they can," Screech said. "In fact, I already know why."

"You do?" Slater asked, both surprised and a bit suspicious.

"Mitch is a hunk," Screech explained. "Girls always go for hunks. I ought to know, since I am one." He struck a pose similar to that of a champion bodybuilder. Only with Screech's skinny form, it looked really silly.

"Yeah, well, I thought we were hunks, too," Slater said. "But are they paying that much attention to us?"

"No," Zack answered. "They prefer a picture of a guy instead of spending time with one in the flesh."

"Go figure," Slater murmured. "Well, at least some aren't like the other girls."

At that moment, Jessie Spano came around the cor-

ner. Kelly glanced up, caught her friend's eye, and signaled to her. "I got the poster!" Kelly squealed happily.

"Of Mitch?" Jessie demanded, and plowed her way into the center of the crowd.

Zack glanced over at Slater. "You were saying?"

Slater shook his head. "Girls," he said, and sighed.

"Never fear," Screech said. "The girls may like having posters of good-looking dudes to hang on their walls, but you seem to forget that we are all about to become poster hunks."

"Oh yeah. School pictures," Slater murmured thoughtfully. "Maybe I should order more eight-by-ten photographs and fewer billfold size."

"I was thinking life-size, myself," Screech confessed proudly. "You can never have too much of a good thing."

"What about you, preppie?" Slater asked. "You've got that scamming look on your face."

"Me?" Zack tried to look surprised. "I'm trying to give up running scams, remember? Kelly doesn't like them."

"Yet, if you give them up you miss out on spending all that quality time with Mr. Belding," Slater commented with a grin.

"Still . . .," Zack said, and let the idea hang unfinished.

"Uh-oh," Slater whispered to Screech. "We're in for it now."

"Wouldn't every guy like to be the hunk hanging in a girl's locker?" Zack asked.

"Yeah," Slater answered carefully.

"Well, sure," Screech declared, his voice breaking on the final word.

"And wouldn't every girl like to be the babe taped up in a guy's locker?" Zack continued.

"I know a few I'd like to have posters of," Slater said, watching the huddle of girls in their short skirts and formfitting jeans.

Zack gazed at them thoughtfully himself. "You know, Lisa says she's busy helping everybody look their best."

Screech nodded. "She's doing it for free, too," he said with a proud expression. Screech had been madly in love with Lisa for years. It didn't seem to matter to him that she didn't return his devotion.

"Free," Zack shivered. "Please. Don't say that word around me. There has got to be a way to make a nice profit from this. The girls all want to look like superstar models, and the guys all want to look like movie hunks. ~~Then~~."

"I think I hear Coach calling me," Slater said, and started to edge away.

Zack grabbed his arm. "Not so fast. When is your appointment to have your senior picture taken?"

"I know I'm not going to like this," Slater murmured. "It's next Monday. They're letting members of the football team go first because of practice."

"So we've got a week, huh?" Zack glanced down at the sheet of paper in his hand and smiled to himself. "And I've got the perfect reason to visit Mr. Oppenheimer before then," he murmured happily.

Chapter 2



"This better be a matter of life or death, Zack," Lisa warned later when the gang gathered at the Max, their favorite hangout. "I had to reschedule a meeting with Babette Neidermeyer at Tresses to Dye For to discuss her new hairstyle."

"It's important," Zack assured her, standing up so that Lisa could scoot into the booth next to him.

"Yeah, right," Lisa murmured.

"I'll admit I have my doubts about why you wanted we all meet you, too," Jessie said.

"This isn't some new scam, is it?" Kelly asked.

"A scam?" Zack gave her an innocent look. "You know I gave those up, Kelly."

"Like we really believe that one," Lisa mumbled under her breath to Jessie.

"So what's this all about, preppie?" Slater asked. "Not that I want to rush you, but I'm supposed to be in the locker room suiting up for wrestling practice."

"Funny you should mention lockers," Zack said.

"It is?" Screech asked. He looked thoughtful, then puzzled. "Sorry, Zack, but I must have missed the punch line. What was the joke again?"

Zack leaned forward. "The Bayside lockers are a joke," he told his friends. "The paint is scratched and the hinges are rusting."

"They are?" Screech demanded, surprised yet again.

"Boy, are they ever," Jessie agreed. "I've had trouble getting mine to open. Mr. Monza ended up using a blowtorch to get the hinges off the last time. I thought they'd get me a new locker, but instead I got assigned to an even older, more beat-up one."

Lisa nodded. "As president of the Beautify Bayside Committee, I talked to Mr. Belding about getting new lockers, but he said the school budget is so tight he can't even afford to repaint them."

"That's terrible!" Kelly exclaimed. "There must be something we can do about it!"

"Like have everyone sign a petition," Jessie said.

"Get our parents to complain to the school board. Maybe they could call it a health hazard," Lisa suggested.

"We could make banners," Kelly said, and turned eagerly to Screech, who was seated next to her. "Your new computer does banners, doesn't it?"

"In five glorious colors, babe," he assured her with a wink.

"Well, then we just . . ."

Zack cleared his throat. "And what good will it do to have a petition, irate parents, or banners if the school still doesn't have the money to fix the lockers?" he asked.

"Oh," Kelly said with a gulp. "I suppose you are right about that, Zack. So do you have a plan?"

"A plan?" he repeated. "Let's say I have a suggestion on how we can help dear old Bayside."

Slater leaned back in his seat and grinned. "Dear old Bayside? I think I just heard the opening bars of the national anthem," he said.

"No, no. The school song," Jessie corrected.

"It's easy, really," Zack said.

Jessie hummed the opening bars of "Bayside, My Bayside," the song that they all sang to open every school assembly.

"As members of the senior class, it is our duty to leave Bayside with something to remember us by," Zack explained.

Kelly joined Jessie, humming in harmony with her.

"If we can make our school just a little bit better for future generations, we can graduate proudly," Zack continued.

Lisa and Slater joined the humming. Screech fumbled in his pocket for a kazoo and was soon giving a heartfelt rendition of "Bayside, My Bayside" as well.

"We can go forth into the world better people because we have left part of ourselves behind as an example to those who follow us," Zack said.

"Stuff it, preppie. The coach is waiting for me," Slater reminded him. "What's the scam?"

"Scam?" Zack looked hastily at Kelly. "There's no scam at all."

Kelly smiled softly across the table at him. "Go on, Zack. Tell us. If we'll be helping the school, even a scam can be a good thing."

Zack breathed a bit easier. It was hard to change his ways, even if doing so won him the love of the most kind and gorgeous girl he'd ever known. Still, it was worth it just to have Kelly grinning at him that way.

"It's like this," he said. "I've already talked to the Camera Club and they tell me that they can easily reproduce our school pictures from one photograph."

"So we save our parents' money by not ordering seeds of pictures from Xavier Oppenheimer?" Jessie asked.

"Not exactly," Zack said.

"I'd be willing to get only a single photo from Mr. Oppenheimer's studio," Kelly said, "because my family doesn't have a lot of money to spend on pic-

tures. But it can't be done. I know because I asked."

"Yeah," Slater agreed. "The smallest package is twenty-five copies in different sizes."

"Ah, but none of those sizes includes poster size," Zack pointed out. "That's what we'll be selling."

Screech looked impressed. "Wow! I know my grandmother would like a poster of me. She'd be able to see me without wearing her glasses."

"If every senior supplies one copy of their picture, we'll have an inventory to start from," Zack explained. "We can begin taking orders as soon as they are available."

Lisa frowned. "I don't understand."

"It's simple. Say you have a crush on someone at Bayside," Zack said.

"Like Keith Bockman?" Lisa asked.

"Ohh. Keith Bockman," Kelly sighed. "He is so ~~etc.~~"

"And the way he looks after a tennis game with his hair all tousled and falling in his face," Jessie added dreamily, "is enough to make a girl forget where she is."

Slater and Zack exchanged a look. Having the girls gushing about another guy at Bayside didn't suit their plans.

Screech's face was screwed up in thought. "So if ~~you~~ a crush on Purity Pasternak—"

"Ahh! Purity Pasternak," Slater murmured sarcastically. "Who wouldn't have a crush on her?"

Jessie scowled at him.

"Purity Pasternaki!" Lisa growled.

"Oh! Not that I do have a crush on her, my darling," Screech hastened to assure her. "I was just using her as an example."

"A great example," Slater added. "Right, preppie?"

Zack bit his tongue to keep from laughing. Purity was very sweet and kind of cute, in her own way. But she was definitely more Screech's type, with her pig-tails and thick glasses, than she was Zack's.

"As I was saying," Zack continued, "if someone wants to have a poster of a classmate to hang on their wall or inside their locker, they won't have to ask for one. All they have to do is come see us and order one for a low cost. The members of the Camera Club will then make a negative and print a megasize picture. Whatever money we have left over after expenses—"

"What kind of expenses?" Jessie demanded. "Shouldn't everything go to the locker fund?"

Zack leaned back in the booth and crossed his arms over his chest. "Then how are we going to get the supplies needed to print the posters?"

"Oh."

"But everything else goes to the fund, right?" Kelly asked.

"Everything after expenses," Zack assured her. No one needed to know that one of those expenses was a small commission for one Zack Morris, Bayside scammer turned teen entrepreneur.

Kelly beamed at him. "That's a wonderful idea, Zack. But will Mr. Belding okay it?"

Warned by both her smile and her concern, Zack grinned. "Leave Mr. B. to me," he said.

"Don't we always, sweetie?" Lisa asked, and laughed.

▲ ▼ ▲

Zack started the next school day early. It hadn't been easy crawling out of bed before dawn, but it was a sacrifice he was willing to make when deeply involved in a new scam. And, Zack admitted to himself, the locker repair plan was nothing but a scam. He just had to make sure Kelly didn't realize that. Mr. Belding, either, for that matter.

"Zack!" Mr. Belding greeted him when Zack poked his head around the open door of the principal's office. "This is a pleasant surprise. What can I do for you, son?"

"It's not what you can do for me, sir," Zack insisted, strolling into the room and taking a seat before Mr. Belding's desk. "It's what we would like to do for ~~the~~ ^{the} grade."

"We?" Mr. Belding looked suspicious.

"The senior class," Zack explained. "It's about the lockers."

Mr. Belding shook his head sadly. "I know, I know. They are in terrible condition. Mr. Monza and his maintenance staff have tried to keep them in repair, but there is just so much that can be done with an oil can."

"We'd like to help, sir."

"How, Zack? By driving bulldozers down the halls?"

"That would be cool," Zack said, temporarily enjoying the dream of plowing down lockers.

"But I still couldn't afford to rent the bulldozer," Mr. Belding said. "I've already explained this to Lisa, you know. The budget just isn't big enough to cover all the things that need to be done around here."

"We know, sir. It's a terrible failing of the system."

"True," Mr. Belding agreed.

"A terrible example to us young people," Zack continued.

"Sad, but true," Mr. Belding said.

"But it is inspiring," Zack said.

"Yes, yes," Mr. Belding murmured, shaking his head sadly. "A terrible thing—what did you say?"

"It's inspiring, sir."

Mr. Belding's eyes narrowed. "Inspiring? In what way?" he asked suspiciously.

"Well, by simply existing. We can all see that the lockers are in bad shape," Zack said.

"And?"

"And we have all heard that the school district's hands are tied when it comes to either major renovations or replacing them," Zack explained.

"And?"

"And we've all learned in our government classes

that it is our duty as citizens to be responsible," Zack said.

"You? Responsible?" Mr. Belding looked amazed.

"That's a good one, Zack."

"I'm serious, Mr. B. The senior class would like to have a fund-raiser to do something about the lockers so that the students who follow us in the coming years will benefit."

Mr. Belding cocked his head to one side. "What sort of fund-raiser? Not a dunk-the-principal booth, I hope."

Zack smiled. "I had considered it, but profits were off the last time we did it."

"Very funny, Zack. So what do you propose?"

"Oh, not me, sir. This suggestion comes from the whole senior class."

"I'm sure it does," Mr. Belding murmured.

"We'd like to sell posters."

Mr. Belding shook his head sadly once more. "You tried that with pictures of the girls swim team, Zack. When was it? Back in your sophomore year?"

"Those weren't posters, sir. They were calendars. Not-looking calendars."

"The girls didn't think so."

Zack shrugged. "Who knows the way women think, sir? I really believe that most of them felt honored to be the featured babe of the month. But these posters are nothing like the calendars. This time all the photographs will be volunteered by seniors."

"Volunteered, huh?"

Zack quickly explained the concept, emphasizing the idea that profits would go to improve the students' lockers. "You could even give us a picture of yourself, sir. I'm sure a lot of students would enjoy having a poster of you hanging in their homes. It would remind them of the wonderful times they have had here at Bayside."

"You really think so?" Mr. Belding asked.

"Absolutely," Zack said. Heck, he'd like one himself. The dartboard in his room was getting a little worn. If he covered up the bull's-eye with the principal's picture . . .

"Okay, Zack. You've got my permission. But I want to know how things are going every step of the way. And you have to promise me that no student's photo will be used without their permission."

Zack got to his feet and saluted. "You can count on me, sir."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Mr. Belding said.

Chapter 3



Lisa held the hanger with a soft peach two-piece outfit up to her, studied her reflection in the full-length mirror, then swirled to face Kelly and Jessie. "Can you believe it? Izzy sent it to me when he found out Xavier Oppenheimer was taking our pictures."

"You mean Isidore Duncan, the hottest designer in California?" Jessie asked.

"Yeah," Lisa said. "He said to tell you both hi!"

Lisa had spent a few short days as Izzy's assistant after winning the California Young Designer to Watch Award. They had been both heavenly and exhausting days. The gang had all stayed at the hotel Izzy's dad managed. Kelly had modeled Lisa's velvet off-the-shoulder creation in a fashion show, and Lisa had discovered that as fabulous as Izzy's

designs were, he had some major personality flaws. They were still friends, although Lisa sometimes wondered whether Izzy kept in touch just so he'd know if she decided to go into the fashion business herself.

Still, it was great that he had sent one of his designs for her to wear. The most perfectly gorgeous outfit in the world!

Lisa held the hanger up higher so Kelly and Jessie could get a better look at the severely cut jacket and the slim bias-cut skirt. "What do you think?" she asked.

Her friends had kicked off their shoes and were curled up on the bed in Lisa's room.

"Oh, I love that color on you," Kelly cooed. "It does wonderful things for your skin."

"I'll say," Jessie agreed. "I like the lace on the collar. It softens the sophisticated cut. What's it look like on, though?"

"It's a dream, of course," Lisa said. "When it arrived three weeks ago and I tried it on, Mom told me it fit so well that it might have been custom-made for me."

Kelly grinned at Jessie. "Except we both know Lisa could never wait long enough to have something custom-made. Even if it was an Isidore Duncan creation. She always shows up at school in an outfit the day after she gets it."

"Hey, I waited this time, girlfriend," Lisa insist-

ed. "Wearing this outfit anywhere before Xavier Oppenheimer takes my picture in it would be like wearing my wedding dress to the mall!" Lisa sighed softly as she gazed fondly at the peach fabric. "It's been hard to resist, though. I mean, would you look at how gorgeous this thing is?"

"Boy, is it ever," Kelly said wistfully. "I sure wouldn't be able to resist wearing it if I were you. Haven't you even put it on in the privacy of your own room?"

"Girl, I haven't had time," Lisa declared. "I don't know how anyone at Bayside ever got dressed without my guidance. I've been so busy I almost asked Xerech to do my homework for me."

"You didn't!" Jessie gasped.

Lisa gave her a get-real look. "I said almost," she pointed out. "Just in case I do decide I want to be a doctor like my mom and dad, I don't want anything on my school record to even hint that I didn't do my own work. It would be death on my college application."

Kelly gazed longingly at the outfit in Lisa's hand. "You haven't tried it on even once in three weeks?"

"Nope," Lisa said. She touched the fabric softly with her fingertips. "Not even once." She glanced over at her friends and grinned mischievously at them. "At least, not until today. Let me show you how it looks."

There was an antique dressing screen in the corner of Lisa's room. It had belonged to her great-

grandmother, but everyone in the Turtle family felt that Lisa used it far more than her ancestress had. She ducked behind it now and soon had tossed her loose-fitting tunic and flowing, wide-leg slacks over the top.

Kelly dropped her chin in her hand, her elbow on her knee. "I wish I could afford something special to wear when I have my photo session. I saw this gorgeous blue dress at *Très Charmant* . . ."

"Ohh, that's my favorite shop," Lisa called from behind the screen.

" . . . but since I'm saving everything I make at Yogurt 4-U for college, I had to talk myself out of it," Kelly finished sadly. "One of these days I won't have to count my pennies."

"Or go shopping for your own clothes," Jessie added. "You'll be a famous actress, and if the wardrobe department doesn't supply you with drop-dead outfits, then designers will be fighting to have you wear their clothes."

Kelly smiled a warm thank-you at her friend. "I wish," she said.

"You'll make it," Jessie insisted. "After all, you already know someone in the business."

"You mean Mitch?"

"Hey, he got you a job through his agent when you were in his acting class, didn't he?" Jessie reminded her.

"Yeah, but I blew it," Kelly said. "I was terrible

Besides, my friendship with Mitch is different than Lisa's with Izzy. I mean, Izzy already knows that Lisa's got talent. I'll bet he'd even be willing to be her mentor. I don't think Mitch would ever take a chance with my acting abilities again."

"At least you and Lisa both have someone to network with in the future. I don't know anyone with ~~any~~ pull," Jessie declared with a moan.

"Sure you do," Kelly insisted. "You got Sequoia Forrest his job with *You Witness Crime*, didn't you? ~~Now~~ he's a hotshot environmental reporter."

Jessie dropped back against the bed pillows. "Like that will really help me if I become a lawyer."

"It will if you become a lawyer who specializes in environmental law," Kelly said. "Sequoia will have contacts you can use all over the place."

"Hmm. I hadn't thought of that," Jessie mused. "You know, we three are in a much better position ~~than~~ the guys are when it comes to our careers."

"We sure are," Lisa declared, stepping out from ~~behind~~ the screen. "We have contacts and they don't. ~~Could~~ you give me a hand with the zipper on this ~~art~~ Kelly? I think it must be stuck on a thread or ~~something~~ 'cause it won't budge."

"No problem," Kelly said, and bounced off the ~~bed~~. "I hadn't thought about it before, but that stuff ~~about~~ contacts or mentors is right. Zack's father owns ~~an~~ own computer business, but Zack isn't interested ~~in~~ working with computers. Slater's dad is a major in

the army, but Slater has no intention of following in any military footsteps. And Screech—well, Screech is Screech. I don't see anything jamming this zipper. Lisa. Are you sure it isn't broken?"

Lisa glanced back over her shoulder. "It wouldn't dare be. Just zip me up."

Kelly gave a careful tug. The zipper didn't move. "You didn't take this to the dry cleaners or anything, did you?"

"No," Lisa said. "Why?"

Kelly shrugged and looked apologetic. "Oh, well. I thought maybe they had . . . er . . . shrunk the fabric." She glanced over at Jessie with a look that begged for help.

Jessie rolled off the bed. "Let me try it," she offered.

But the zipper still wouldn't budge.

Kelly and Jessie exchanged a worried look. "Uh, are you sure it fit before, Lisa?" Jessie ventured.

"Like a second skin," Lisa insisted. "Why?"

"Maybe you're just retaining water today," Kelly offered. "It happens and . . ." Her voice trailed off.

"Have any of your other clothes felt tight lately?" Jessie asked.

Lisa twisted, considering herself in the mirror and trying unsuccessfully to fasten the back of her skirt. "I've been experimenting with the relaxed look lately," she admitted. "You know, waistless baby-doll

dresses, tunics and broomstick skirts, and baggy jeans with oversize T-shirts."

Kelly dived for Lisa's closet and hunted up her friend's favorite pair of bicycle shorts. "Try these on," she urged. "That way we'll know if this is just the wrong day to try on Izzy's outfit or if there is something wrong with it."

Lisa ducked behind the screen again, but moments later Kelly and Jessie heard her give a tragic groan.

"Lisa?" they both asked anxiously. "Are you all right?"

"No," Lisa cried. "I'm fat!"

▲ ▼ ▲

Kelly waited until Jessie had driven her car three blocks away from the Turtle home before asking the question that was on both their minds.

"Do you think she'll be okay? She was awfully upset about gaining weight. You know what a perfectionist she is."

Jessie stared ahead over the steering wheel. "Yeah, but Lisa's smart. She'll be all right."

"She's very intelligent," Kelly added.

"She'll simply do what we'd do in the same spot," Jessie said.

"Cry?"

Jessie sighed. "Yeah, cry."

"Ten pounds," Kelly murmured. "I didn't think anybody could put on that much weight in just a few weeks."

"It depends on what you eat," Jessie said. "Lisa told us she's been eating nothing but fast food at the mall for weeks now."

"Well, there aren't many places where you can get healthy meals on the run," Kelly admitted. "Especially not at the mall."

"At least Lisa's lucky that her appointment with Xavier Oppenheimer isn't for another couple weeks. If she watches her diet and exercises a bit more, she'll be able to wear something from her closet by then."

"She just can't wear Izzy's outfit," Kelly said.

Jessie nodded. "People in television commercials may say they lost a lot of weight in a short time, but no one can lose ten pounds in that short a time and stay healthy."

"I really feel terrible for her," Kelly confessed. "I mean, she was so busy helping the rest of the senior class look good, and this had to happen. You think there's any way we can help her?"

"Other than moral support? We could eat only salads at lunch," Jessie suggested.

"Okay. I can do that. But can you see Zack or Slater giving up burgers or french fries covered in nacho cheese?" Kelly asked.

"They'll have to if we're all going to help Lisa."

"And if they don't, I know just how to get them to do what we want," Kelly said with a mischievous grin.

Jessie chuckled. "I think I know exactly what you have in mind. If they don't do as we ask, then we spread the word and neither of them will ever date a girl from Bayside again. But what about Screech? We can't use that threat with him. He doesn't have much luck getting dates to begin with."

"Screech is not a problem," Kelly said. "He worships the ground Lisa walks on. Or would if she'd let him. He'll do anything to help her."

▲ ▼ ▲

Lisa dabbed at her tear-redened eyes with a washcloth dripping with cold water. Wasn't it bad enough that she had inadvertently made herself fat? Now she'd made her eyes all puffy by crying, and at dinner all her parents would have to do is look at her to know that something was megawrong.

Well, at least it was megawrong as far as she was concerned. It probably wouldn't seem as drastic to her parents. Her mom and dad would commiserate with her, suggest doctor-approved methods for slow weight loss, and remind her that there would be many other special occasions in her life when she could wear her gorgeous design. Her mother would suggest that they go through Lisa's closet, or her own, to find a different, looser fitting dress to wear when she went to Mr. Oppenheimer's studio. Her father would sigh and offer to buy her a new outfit. They were well meaning, but they just didn't understand. Nothing they suggested was going to work!

She was going to have her senior picture taken wearing just one thing—an Isidore Duncan designer dress. The outfit that Izzy had sent specially to her for the photo session. Nothing else would do. No compromise, no shopping marathon, no substitutes.

Lisa squared her shoulders in determination and stared at her reflection in the medicine cabinet mirror, gathering her courage. It wouldn't be easy to shed the new weight, but she could do it. And do it fast. All she needed was to look at the situation calmly, make a plan, and stick to it.

She tilted her chin higher and took a deep breath.

The first thing to do was get a calorie counter and something to tell her about fat grams in various foods. The bookstore at the mall probably had a wide selection in the health and beauty section. She could run there after dinner.

Lisa tilted her chin higher and leaned closer to the mirror. Was her neck fatter, too? Probably. She sighed deeply. Weight was never gained in just one spot, even if there were exercise programs that concentrated on reducing, trimming, and toning the tummy or the thighs.

Well, forget about dinner. She'd tell her mom and dad that she had a superbig load of schoolwork to do at the library and would eat when she got back. Then, later on she'd feed the contents of her plate to the hungry garbage disposal instead of actually eating it herself.

Her neck definitely did look thicker. Great! Just what she needed—a football player's neck. Maybe she did need special spot-reducing exercises. Was there one for trimming the width of a person's neck?

Lisa hastily wrung out the washcloth and hung it up to dry before heading for her desk. In nothing flat she had a notepad handy and was chewing thoughtfully on the end of a pencil.

What would she need? Hmm. Well, besides the calorie and fat-gram charts, an exercise guide was a real must.

Lisa hurriedly jotted each item on her list.

And if she was going to be exercising, she needed exercise clothing. High-cut dance leotards and matching tights would not only be comfortable, they would help her feel good about herself as she slaved to get rid of the excess pounds.

It would be a good idea to have coordinating headbands and hair ornaments so that she looked her best even while she sweated.

And new cross-trainers for her feet. Oh, and leg warmers, too! Hmm. What else?

She heard the front door open and close and the loud sounds her parents made as they dropped their briefcases off in their separate studies and shed their jackets.

"Lisa!" her father's voice called. "Your mother and I are both home. I'm the chef tonight. How do you feel about beef strips and pea pods stir-fried in

the wok? It will be ready in half an hour."

Gosh! It was that late already?

Lisa ripped her list from the notebook and shoved it in her purse. She'd think of other things to add when she got to the mall. Right now it was extremely necessary to get out of the house before dinner started cooking. Before the wonderful aroma of soy sauce and sizzling beef tempted her.

"Can't eat now, Dad," Lisa shouted as she scooped up her car keys and buzzed out of her room. "I've got this superbig research project due!" Thirty seconds later, she was on her way to the mall.

Chapter 4



Xavier Oppenheimer's photo studio was located in the new high-rise office building in downtown Palisades. The skyscraper rose twenty stories and seemed to be made of solid walls of smoky colored glass. Oppenheimer's was on the top floor. When the elevator doors sighed open, Zack saw the most gorgeous view he'd ever seen.

The windows of the waiting room looked out on the Pacific Ocean and a stretch of sky that appeared to be endless.

Zack wasn't interested in either the sky or the ocean, though. He strolled slowly through the long room, his athletic shoes sinking deeply into a pearl gray carpet. There were pearl gray sofas every-

where, but he could hardly see them for the gorgeous girls perched on them.

Models!

Being surrounded by them was like being in heaven. Zack's step slowed even more.

He stopped when a heavy hand landed on his shoulder.

"Can I help you?"

Zack turned to see a guy the size of Arnold Schwarzenegger in jeans and a muscle shirt.

The dude was huge. His arms bulged like those of a professional wrestler, and he was tall—at least five inches taller than Zack. More like a giant than a human being. And he looked ticked off.

Zack swallowed a gulp of fear. "Uh, yeah. At least, I hope you can. I'm from Bayside High. I came about my senior pictures."

"You got an appointment?" the bruiser asked.

"Not yet."

"You need an appointment."

"I know that," Zack said. "That's what I'm here about."

The big guy frowned. "I thought you said you didn't have an appointment."

"I don't."

"Then beat it. Mr. O. is busy."

Zack shook his head. "Wait a minute," he insisted, holding up his hands. "If I have to leave, how can I make an appointment with Mr. O.?"

"Same way everyone else does," the giant said. "You call."

"But why call when I'm already here?" Zack asked. "Wouldn't it be simpler if I just talked to someone about making an appointment now?"

"You need to call, buddy. That's the rules."

Rules, as far as Zack was concerned, were only made for him to break. "Okay, so tell me what I need to do."

The giant frowned. His eyebrows came together over the center of his nose so that they looked like one really hairy, really chubby caterpillar. "What do you mean?"

Zack gave him a wide smile. "Hey, I'm just a teenager. I don't know the correct business manner. You know," he added thoughtfully, "you could help me on this."

"Yeah?" the guy growled, suspicious. "In what way?"

"I'll pretend to call and you answer my call. Then if I say something wrong, you can let me know. Okay?"

Zack watched as the big guy thought over the suggestion. Zack just hoped he was as stupid as he acted.

"Okay," the big guy said a bit reluctantly.

"Great!" Zack pantomimed picking up a telephone receiver and dialing. "Ring, ring," he said.

The giant glared at him.

"Aren't you going to answer the phone?" Zack asked.

He was amazed when the big man pretended to pick up a telephone receiver. "Oppenheimer Studios," he said.

Zack grinned. Not only was the guy stupid, he was really stupid.

"Hello," Zack said into his invisible phone. "I'm a senior at Bayside High and I'd like to make an appointment with Mr. Oppenheimer for my school picture."

"Sure," the giant said. "We had someone cancel earlier today. How's four o'clock this afternoon?"

"That would be great," Zack declared. "My name is Zack Morris. I'll be there a few minutes before four. Thank you very much."

"Our pleasure," the giant said, and hung up his pretend phone.

Figuring he should humor the muscle-bound guy, Zack did the same.

"Now you know how it's done," the man said. "Scram."

Zack shook his head sadly. "But I can't. I've got an appointment at four today." He pointed to the clock on the wall above the elevator doors. It read a few minutes before four. "I'm right on time, you see," Zack continued. "I felt it was good business ethics to be punctual."

"Why you . . .," the giant growled.

"Relax, Seymour," a woman said. "The kid is right. And I heard you give him the four o'clock slot."

She stepped between Zack and his would-be pulverizer and held out her hand. "Hi. I'm Lani Alcoa, Xavier's assistant."

She was the same height as Kelly and had long dark hair—just like Kelly's. Lani even had the same color eyes. She could have been Kelly's older sister or cousin, Zack thought. Not that they looked anything alike other than the similarity in coloring.

Zack took her hand readily and pumped it eagerly. "Thanks for keeping me from becoming a grease spot on the carpet."

Lani grinned. "Xavier wouldn't like that. It's a new carpet. Why don't you follow me, and we'll have you immortalized in nothing flat."

"Immortalized," Zack mused, his steps matching hers as Lani led the way down a hall away from the view of sky, ocean, and gorgeous girls. "I like the sound of that."

"I thought you might," she said. "You're pretty good to pull a stunt like that with Seymour. Usually just the sight of him is enough to send people running."

"I can believe that," Zack said. "Does that mean you don't rescue everyone?"

Lani pulled open a door. Zack held it for her as he breezed into the big, windowless room beyond it.

She glanced back over her shoulder, tossing her

long dark hair as she did so. "Rescue you? Why would I do that when you had an appointment?" Her eyes glittered with a hint of laughter. "Even if it was a very recent booking. Take a seat on that stool while I set up the camera."

Zack watched her move around, not only maneuvering a camera into position but adjusting various lights. There was no pearl gray carpet in this section of the offices, just a cement floor painted a flat charcoal gray. The room was more like a small stadium, or at least it seemed so to Zack since Lani's voice echoed as she talked.

"So tell me about yourself, Zack," Lani urged. "I'm surprised that you're still in high school. I would have thought you were older."

Older? That had a nice ring to it.

"I'll be eighteen in a couple months," Zack volunteered.

"Lots of girlfriends?"

Zack shrugged, deciding to be modest. "A few."

Lani grinned. "More than a few, I'll bet," she said. "You're a really great-looking guy."

True, Zack thought.

"Look this way and say dimpled knees," Lani instructed.

"Dimpled knees."

A brilliant light flashed, creating spots before Zack's eyes.

"You ever do any modeling, Zack?" Lani asked.

"I was a guest teen host on ROCK-TV for a week once," he volunteered. "But modeling? Nope. Never tried it."

Lani moved around in the dim area beyond the spotlights. "Tilt your chin a bit higher and to the right. If you're interested, I might be able to pull a few strings to get you a modeling assignment."

Zack's mouth fell open in shock just as the flash blinded him again.

"I don't think you're going to like that one," Lani said.

Zack shut his mouth, flashed his famous smile at her—or where he thought she was since he couldn't see her with all the spots blocking his vision—and waited for the next shot to be finished before answering.

"I might be interested," he said.

"Only might? The pay is good," Lani said, and mentioned a sum that Zack thought was more than good. It was totally awesome.

"You've got the look I want for some particular ads," Lani continued.

"What would I be doing? Modeling designer clothes?" Zack asked, his mind already dreaming of the bright red Ferrari he would buy with his modeling fees.

"No."

"Demonstrating sports equipment?"

"Not exactly."

Zack frowned. "It isn't a cologne ad, is it?"

"Relax, honey. The only thing we'd be selling is you."

"Me?"

"You." The camera and its accompanying flash went off. "You'd wear your own clothes, and the whole shoot would be done on the beach. All you have to do is flash that killer smile when I ask you to," Lani said.

Just the thought of being paid for doing so little had Zack's mouth curving.

"Ah, great one!" Lani purred behind the camera as she took another shot. "That's it for the Bayside pictures. So what do you say? Do you want the modeling job?"

Zack slid off the stool. "How can I say no?"

Lani chuckled. "You can't. Let me talk to some people to arrange things. I'll call you with the schedule. In the meantime, why don't you pump some iron in the school gym to tone up a little?"

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At lunch the next day, Zack shoved sheets of notebook paper in Jessie's and Kelly's hands before sitting down to attack a couple of jumbo tacos Kelly offered him.

"What's this supposed to be?" Jessie asked, netting her sheet at him.

"A schedule," Zack said, and bit into the first taco. The shell crunched. He could taste the tangy

sauce, the cool shredded lettuce, and the bits of tomato, but something major was lacking. "Hey, where is the rest of my taco?"

"In your lap?" Jessie suggested. "A schedule for what?"

"For working in the poster booth," Zack stared at his lunch. "What happened to the meat and the cheese and the refried beans? You know I like my tacos stuffed, Kelly."

"They are stuffed," she said. "Stuffed with salad stuff."

Zack screwed up his face in disgust. "Even two salads have got more in them than this," he told her, and pushed his chair away from the table. "I might be able to handle meatless tacos if I add a burger as a side dish, though. Be right back."

"Zack?" Kelly called, her voice soft and sweet-sounding. "Would you like to go to a movie with me and then take a romantic walk on the beach?"

Zack froze. "The beach? A walk?"

"A really long walk," Kelly said. "There's supposed to be a full moon tomorrow night. It should be really beautiful."

It sounded more than just beautiful. It sounded like the perfect setting to warm his way back into Kelly's heart. With the surf rolling in and the moonlight glittering on the waves, Kelly might be more inclined to agree to go steady with him again.

Zack took her hand and drew it to rest over his

heart. "Kelly, Kelly, Kelly. How do you manage to read so well the feelings I hide inside? Shall I pick you up at eight?"

"Eight would be nice," Kelly agreed, "but only if you sit back down and eat your tacos."

"For you, anything," Zack murmured. "Just let me get a—"

"No, Zack. We need to be supportive of Lisa while she's dieting, so our date is only on if you stick to eating salads. Small salads."

Zack sank into the chair next to her. "I need nourishment," he insisted.

Jessie reached in her purse and pulled out a bottle of multivitamins. She offered him one. "Now about this schedule of yours, Morris," she said. "I don't see your name on it anywhere."

Zack looked sadly at Kelly. "Pizza?"

"No, Zack."

"What's the deal?" Jessie demanded. "You think that just because you came up with the idea that you don't have to do any of the work? Granted, I'll agree that it is a great idea to make money for new lockers, but this is just not going to work. For one thing, you've got more girls working the booth than boys. That's sexist thinking, and I won't stand for it."

"Chili dog?" Zack asked Kelly.

She shook her head gently.

"Submarine sandwich?"

"If we rearrange this into half-hour shifts and see

the members of the football and track teams, we could double up, one boy and one girl in the booth to share the duties," Jessie said.

Zack sighed loudly and reached for his meagerly stuffed tacos. "The things I do for love," he murmured.

Kelly smiled happily at him. "Thank you, Zack."

Jessie tapped a pencil thoughtfully against her teeth. "We shouldn't let two nerds work the booth together, either. We've got to balance them with the jocks. Have you thought about seeing if we could do team or club posters as well? Zack, are you listening to me?"

"Mmmph," Zack mumbled, his mouth full of said taco.

"He said it was a great idea," Kelly translated, and grinned fondly at Zack. "Isn't that right, Zack?"

"Mmmph," Zack said in resignation.

Chapter 5



Lunch period was nearly over before Lisa joined the gang. When she did it was with a tiny plastic bag of celery sticks rather than a tray of cafeteria food.

Slater took one look at Lisa's lunch and shuddered with revulsion before turning back to his bowl of tomato soup. Crumbled crackers had turned it to the consistency of oatmeal, but that was better, Slater figured, than the air-filled tacos Zack had been forced to eat. Next to him Screech savored another bite of a broccoli-bean sprout-and-blackberries-on-whole-wheat-bread sandwich as if it were as savory as one of the Max's triple-decker megaburgers. Just the thought of a giant burger made Slater's mouth water. Hastily, he shoveled another spoonful of lumpy tomato soup in his mouth.

"Where have you been?" Jessie asked Lisa. "You

missed out on helping me rearrange Zack's poster booth schedule."

Zack grinned and reached for a blackberry that had rolled free of Screech's sandwich.

"You never need help with something like that," Lisa said, sliding into the empty chair next to Jessie. She took a celery stick and bit into it before tossing the plastic bag on the table. "Anybody want one?"

When Zack reached for one, Kelly kicked his ankle. He retracted his hand quickly. "On second thought, I'm really stuffed. Thanks anyway, Lisa."

"Celery is great stuff," Lisa said. "I heard that by just chewing it you burn more calories than you get from eating it."

"What did you say?" Slater asked. "I couldn't hear you over the noise that celery makes as you eat it."

"She said that—," Screech began. He stopped in surprise when Kelly kicked him beneath the table. "Ouch!"

"Slater's kidding, Screech," she explained softly.

"Oh!" Screech said, and slanted a suspicious look at Slater. "How could you tell?"

Lisa finished off her celery stick. "Very funny, Slater. You should see the great things I got at the health food store." She pulled her purse open and began piling pill bottles on the table.

"Now here's something right up your alley, ~~man~~," Slater told Jessie. "You spend so much ~~time~~ in that store, I'll bet you can even tell us on

which aisle Lisa found each of her treasures."

"I do not," Jessie insisted. "Oh, powdered wheat germ. That's great stuff, Lisa. Halfway down aisle four, third shelf up from the bottom, isn't it?"

When Slater chuckled, Jessie glared at him. "So, okay, I do know the exact location of a few items at the health food store. Make a case of it, caveman, and you'll be wearing that soup."

Slater pantomimed buttoning his lip.

Zack watched in amazement as Lisa kept adding one small vial after another to her collection on the table. "You've got a whole alphabet of vitamins here," he said.

"Better believe it, sweetie. Protein supplements, too. Care for a bit of tofu fudge?"

Hungry as he was, the idea of fudge made from bean curd was enough to make him lose his appetite. "No thanks. I'm trying to cut down on desserts."

"That's exactly why I'm trying to give it away," Lisa said. "It was a free sample at the store. Who wants it?"

Slater kept his eyes on his soup and quickly filled his mouth with a spoonful so he wouldn't have to answer.

Jessie and Kelly declined just as quickly.

"Heck, I'll take it if you don't want it, Lisa," Screech volunteered. "My aunt Caledonia makes a darn good tofu fudge, but I haven't seen her much since the accident."

"Your aunt was in an accident? I hope she's okay," Jessie said.

"As well as can be expected," Screech said.

"What happened?" Kelly asked.

"Oh, nothing much. She just got caught in a stampede of chickens."

"I don't think I want to know the rest of this," Zack murmured under his breath.

"Aunt Caledonia was trying to retrain them to wake up at a later hour because she likes to sleep late," Screech said. "She figured if she made sure they didn't doze off until late at night, they'd sleep in the morning. So, just as the chickens were nodding off, Aunt Caledonia blew on a shrill whistle. The rest is just paramedic history."

"I'll bet it is," Slater commented, and passed the tofu fudge to Screech.

Everyone watched while Screech sniffed, licked, and finally tasted the sample of fudge. "Hmm. Could use a bit more parsley."

"Parsley in fudge?" Zack said faintly as he sank back in his chair. "Suddenly these salad tacos don't seem nearly so bad."

Jessie carefully studied each of Lisa's horde of health store purchases. "It looks like you've covered everything," she said.

"Not quite," Lisa insisted. "I need to get some weights to use while exercising, and a variety of exercise videos. I thought you guys might be able to help

me with those things. Slater? Could you go with me to Sporting Biff's Really Buff Bargain Sweat-Producing Stuff? I'd like your advice on ankle weights and small barbells."

"No problema, Lisa. I'll even talk Biff into giving you one of his Pocket Puncher discounts on your equipment," Slater offered.

"That's great. Er, Screech? Do you still know the owners of Picture This Videos?"

"We're like this," Screech announced, and tried to cross his fingers, only his arms got involved and he ended up looking a bit like a pretzel.

"Why more than one exercise tape?" Kelly asked.

"Think about it, girl," Lisa urged. "Watching the same thing over and over again would probably put me to sleep instead of help me burn off a few pounds."

Kelly propped her chin in her hand. "I guess that's true. But you're only doing this for a couple weeks, Lisa, and you've already spent a small fortune at the health food store."

"Pay me," Zack offered, "and I'll get the coach to let you run with the track team."

Lisa laughed. "No thanks, honey. When I have guys running after me, I want to be able to slow down so they can catch me."

"I hear Keith Bockman recently joined the track team so he'd stay in shape for tennis," Kelly said. "There might be a way to get him to notice you."

"While I'm hot and sweaty?" Lisa exclaimed. "Think again, girl. I'd rather meet him when I can look really good."

"Ah, tennis," Zack murmured dreamily.

"So," Lisa said, her attention on the boys seated at the other end of the table. "When can we go shopping? How's three o'clock, Slater?"

He shook his head sadly. "Sorry. I've got wrestling practice. Would seven do?"

The gang all turned their heads to look at Lisa.

She pulled an appointment organizer from her purse and leafed through it quickly. "Oops. Nope. I'm helping Lareina Reitenhaus find something special to wear for her senior picture."

Everyone's head turned back toward Slater.

"Eight, then?" he counteroffered.

"You don't know much about dress shopping, do you," Lisa said.

Slater grinned. "Nothing, in fact."

"Honey, it will take Lareina and me till the mall closes to just make up our minds. Tomorrow at lunch?"

"Er, I can't. Jessie's got me working the poster order booth then," Slater said.

Eyes moved to where Lisa sat, her finger running down a column of notes in her book.

"I've got a Bayside Beautification Committee meeting after school, but I could meet you at Biff's at five."

Necks swiveled back in Slater's direction.

"We've got a family dinner with Dad's commanding officer," he confessed. "No way I can get out of that. What about eight?"

Lisa consulted her schedule again. "Nope. Ronnie Burchwood and his barber have me booked. The day after that at four?"

Slater sighed deeply. "Finally. Yes, I can help you pick out weights then."

"Thank goodness," Zack muttered, rubbing his neck. "I don't think I could take much more of this."

"Oh, good!" Lisa smiled brightly at Slater and snapped her book closed. "It's a date."

"No, it isn't," Jessie said.

Zack groaned as everyone turned to stare at Jessie.

Lisa took another celery stick. "It isn't a date date Jessie. Not that Slater wouldn't be a great date."

Slater squared his shoulders and grinned wide, his dimples flashing.

"... but he's not my type," Lisa continued.

Slater's grin turned to a frown.

"We're just friends. You don't need to get all jealous about this," Lisa said.

"I'm not," Jessie insisted. "Slater and I aren't seeing each other. But you can't meet him at four the day after tomorrow."

"Why not?" Lisa demanded.

"Because," Jessie said, and rattled a sheet of

notebook paper at her friend, "you are working the poster booth at that time."

Zack groaned loudly and let his head drop onto the table. He didn't think he could take much more of this scheduling Ping-Pong match.

"Shoot," Lisa mumbled. She flicked over more pages in her appointment book. "Then how about—"

The bell thrilled, signaling the end of the lunch period.

Zack sighed gratefully. "Saved by the bell," he murmured.

Kelly giggled. "I never thought I'd see the day when you would want to go to class," she said.

"Ugh! Major bummer," Zack groaned. "Meet you after school?"

"Can't," Kelly said as she gathered up her textbooks. "I have to—"

"Don't tell me," Zack said. "Jessie has you scheduled to work in the poster booth."

She gave him a wide smile. "Okay, I won't."

Chapter 6



Lisa stepped off the scale and sighed in disgust. For a week now she had been surviving on the diet of a rabbit. She knew what the fluffy little animals ate because she had gotten a pet bunny for Easter when she was six. If she had to eat only vegetables much longer, her nose would probably start twitching, just like her bunny's had.

Did Jessie's nose twitch? She was an adamant vegetarian, never touching meat at all. That was the hardest part of this diet. Giving up some of her favorite foods. Like beef Stroganoff.

Just the thought of the dish made Lisa's mouth water. She could almost taste the thinly cut strips of

beef, the golden egg noodles covered in a sauce of butter, mushrooms, and sour cream.

Thinking it would be a treat for her daughter, Lisa's mother had made Stroganoff the night before. It had been the hardest thing in the world to turn down even a small helping and content herself with a salad sprinkled with a dressing of lemon juice.

Well, as much as she wished she could give up her vegetable-only diet, the fact was vegetables were all she could afford to eat. Her diet book claimed that carrots alone had very few calories and next to no grams of fat.

Celery, of course, was still the best bet. She'd found it listed as a food that helped melt body fat. Trouble was, eating celery was a noisy business. She could barely hear herself think when munching on a stick of the stuff.

There were other things she could eat, but celery and carrots were a lot easier to carry with her than asparagus or artichokes. When she had tried hamboos they had escaped from the plastic sandwich bag she shoved in her purse and she'd had the fright of her life when she opened it. It looked like a family of albino worms had moved in.

Although they were on the recommended list, Lisa scratched rhubarb and spinach from her personal list. Even when one was dieting madly, there were some things it was impossible to eat.

But becoming a fanatic vegetarian hadn't helped much. In seven days she'd managed to lose only three pounds. And she'd been exercising like crazy the whole time to burn even more calories.

Thanks to Screoch's help at the video store she did warm-up aerobics with fashion model Trilby Hanaban, moved on to a moderately paced workout with actress Atlanta Astin, then dived into an intensive burn round featuring soap opera hunk Nemo Eaglefeather, and a final cool down with tai chi moves demonstrated by martial arts master Lee Putnam.

For times when she was sick of watching the videos, she had equipment to turn to.

Between them, Slater and the salesman at the sporting goods store had turned her bedroom into a minigym. Besides the ankle weights she wore while working out along with the various tapes, there was a stationary cycle, a contraption that imitated moves made during cross-country skiing, and a bench that allowed the user to concentrate on either upper-body or lower-body exercises.

For further inspiration, Lisa hung the gorgeous peach outfit Izzy had designed where she could see it constantly. She was going to manage to make it into that ensemble for her senior picture even if it killed her!

She only had one week before her appointment with Xavier Oppenheimer. She had tried to push it back a few more days, but they wouldn't let her.

Seven days to burn off another seven pounds.

Lisa groaned at the mere thought. Then she caught sight of the beautiful skirt-and-jacket combo hanging on the dressing screen. The afternoon sun shone through her bedroom window with the intensity of a spotlight, highlighting the perfect way the fabric draped, the glow of dyed-to-match pearl buttons, the extreme yet fashion-conscious cut of the fabric, and the perfect fit of every seam.

It was even her favorite color! Lisa closed her eyes briefly, calling on hidden reserves of courage and determination. Then, shoulders squared and chin up, she moved back to the exercise bench.

* * *

Jessie stared at the tiny bag of vegetables in Lisa's hand in the cafeteria the next day. "That's all we're eating? One stalk of celery, four slices of cucumber, and a radish?"

"Barely ten calories, less than one-fifth gram of fat, and some fiber, too," Lisa announced proudly. "Of course, I drink only water."

Zack raised a single eyebrow. "What? No dessert?"

"That's what the radish is," Lisa explained. "I couldn't find any fruit that wasn't stuffed with calories."

"What about grain?" Jessie asked. "Why are you eating this to yourself, Lisa? You shouldn't sacrifice nutrition just to be a few pounds lighter."

"It's only for a short time," Lisa said. "I'll survive."

"I've read that crash diets are never a good thing," Kelly pointed out. "It's always best to lose weight slowly."

"Of course it is," Lisa agreed. "But I don't have the time to do this slowly. I'm on a deadline. Mr. Oppenheimer's studio says if I cancel my appointment with them, I'll have to find somewhere else to have my senior picture taken."

"That's not so bad," Slater said.

Lisa frowned at him. "Get real, bud. This is Xavier Oppenheimer we're talking about, not just some local camera jockey."

"You could always get something else to wear," Kelly suggested.

"And not be photographed wearing an Isidore Duncan original? No way," Lisa insisted. "I've got a week yet, and what with cutting back on my eating, and exercising all the time, I should be able to make it."

"And if you don't?" Jessie asked.

Lisa glared at her. "Don't even suggest it. I am not going to look totally gross in my senior pictures."

"You wouldn't look gross to me, Lisa," Screech said quietly. "I'd love you no matter how you looked."

Lisa softened. "Thanks, Screech."

"You could be as fat as Mrs. Lipscombe at the ice cream shop, and I'd still care. You could have a tan-tache like Ms. Spurling in . . ."

"Er, Screech?" Zack said, noticing the thunder clouds building in Lisa's face.

" . . . the nurse's office, and it wouldn't change a thing," Screech continued. "You could have zits like . . ."

"SCREECH!" Zack yelled, and pulled his friend aside. "Don't overdo it," he suggested.

"Oh, right!" Screech said, and winked slyly. He gave Zack a thumbs-up sign and nearly poked him in the eye.

"We can't help but worry about you, Lisa," Kelly said. "We all care."

"I know," Lisa mumbled contritely. "I'm sorry if I got a little uptight about it all."

"You're forgiven," Kelly insisted, and gave her friend a hug.

"Just don't overdo it," Jessie counseled.

"Yeah," Slater added. "You need to eat right as well as exercise. Any jock knows that."

Lisa's expression started to get stormy again. "We all act as if I were an idiot or something. Do you think that with both my parents being doctors, I could even have a chance to do something stupid? Heck not."

"I didn't mean—," Jessie began.

"Yeah, right," Lisa snapped, cutting her off. "I've got better things to do than listen to this drivel." Before any of them could think, Lisa stood up and strode off across the cafeteria.

Zack stared after her. "I sure hope that doesn't mean Lisa won't be working the poster booth as scheduled."

Jessie and Kelly both glared at him.

"Is that all you can think about?" Jessie growled.

"Really, Zack. I think you can be a little more thoughtful," Kelly insisted. "Lisa's going through some tough times."

"So is Dee Dee Horwitzer," Zack said. "Her locker froze up on her this morning."

Jessie grimaced. "Uh-oh. I know what that feels like. Did Mr. Monza manage to get it opened?"

"No, but Slater did," Zack told them.

The girls both turned to stare in surprise at Slater.

"How?" Jessie asked.

He grinned widely. "I tried just ripping the door off, but the door handle came off in my hand."

The girls' eyes grew wider.

"But things went smoothly after Mr. Monza handed me a crowbar."

"I'm surprised you didn't hear the horrible sound the door made," Zack said. "If we could have recorded it, we could have used it for the haunted house at Halloween and really made a profit. It was really boss."

"So what you're trying to tell us is that selling posters of the seniors is just as important as worrying about Lisa," Jessie said.

"Hey, I didn't say that. Not exactly."

"You're too careful to actually say something that morish," Jessie insisted.

"But you meant it all the same," Kelly added.

Slater shook his head sadly from side to side. "And I thought you were one of those sensitive guys, preppie. I am really disillusioned."

"Me, too," Screech declared, clearly disappointed. "You used to be my hero, Zack. But now it looks like I'll have to find someone else to look up to."

"Guys!" Zack hissed. "Lighten up. I'm just as concerned about Lisa as you are, but there is only so much we can do. And we can't let the poster campaign fail. We can't let Lisa sidetrack us from it any more than we can let it sidetrack us from our worries about Lisa. We can do both things. It just takes a little time management."

Jessie looked at him closely. "Excuse me? Did I hear the words time management come from Zack Morris's mouth?"

"Sure sounded like it to me," Slater said. "Do you think the sky will start falling?"

Screech craned his neck to look out the window at the clear blue California sky. "It seems safe at the moment," he told them.

"It was a figure of speech, Screech," Kelly explained softly. "Slater didn't really mean the sky was falling."

"Speaking of a figure of speech," Zack mur-

mured, "here comes Mr. Belding." He scooped up his textbooks from the table. "You know, I think I'm late for class. See ya!"

A moment later, he had disappeared, blending in with the crowd in the cafeteria.

* * *

Lisa's mother was startled when she came around a corner in her office and nearly ran into her daughter. "Lisa! My goodness! You surprised me, sweetheart. What are you doing here?"

"Oh, just visiting, Mom," Lisa said. "I realized hadn't seen the place since you had the waiting room repainted."

Dr. Turtle looked amused. "We painted it the same shade of ivory it was before," she said. "What the real reason you're here?"

Lisa blushed slightly. "Well, I was wondering if I could use the scale to see what I weigh," she admitted. "I don't think the one we have at home is working right."

"Rather than use the scale, why don't you come into my office for a nice chat," Dr. Turtle suggested.

Feeling a bit trapped, Lisa followed her mother into her comfortably furnished office. A wall of built-in bookshelves held a variety of medical books and professional magazines. There were two comfortable armchairs before the wide wooden desk, and a number of lush houseplants were grouped near the window. There was also a second door at

the room, one that Lisa knew led to her father's office.

Dr. Turtle waited until Lisa had taken a seat in one of the armchairs before knocking on the connecting door and opening it. "Have you got a moment or two to spend with Lisa and me?" she asked her husband.

"I always have time for you and my little girl," the other Dr. Turtle insisted jovially as he strode into his wife's office. "How's my favorite daughter?" he asked, bending to give Lisa a kiss.

"I'm your only daughter, Daddy," Lisa reminded him.

"Lucky for you there isn't much competition, Lisa," he said with a chuckle, and settled back in the other armchair.

"And you are a perfect daughter," Lisa's mother said. "Most of the time."

"Mmm," Lisa's father murmured. "Lately we haven't been too terribly pleased with you, though, princess."

Lisa's mouth nearly dropped open. "But my grades are great!"

"This isn't about grades."

Oh. You think I've been too involved with helping everyone look their best for the senior pictures," Lisa said. "It isn't for much longer. Most of the class has already had their appointment with Mr. Spengler."

"It isn't about your social life, either, Lisa."

Lisa grimaced. "I know I've been spending a lot of money lately. I'll pay you back for all the exercise equipment. I promise. If you don't want to take it out of my allowance, I'll be glad to get a job so I can pay it off faster."

"We aren't talking about money, darling. It's your health we're worried about," Mrs. Turtle said.

"There is nothing wrong with having a few extra pounds on your frame," Lisa's father insisted. "In fact, you've always been too thin to my mind."

"But the way you've been eating, or rather not eating, is dangerous," her mother added. "We both realize that you are concerned with your weight to a different degree than we are, yet we feel you are going about this all the wrong way."

"I'm taking extra vitamins," Lisa said in an effort to reassure them. "And protein supplements."

Her father shook his head slowly. "That's all well and good, princess, but not good enough."

"We'd like you to see Dr. Torrence, the nutrition counselor in the office down the hall, Lisa," her mother said, and smiled softly. "It hasn't been that long since we were your age, darling. We both remember how we hated getting advice from our parents."

Lisa sighed.

"Give it a chance, princess," her father urged.

"Do it for yourself, not for us."

"Who knows?" Mrs. Turtle said. "Dr. Torrence

might be able to tell you something about diet and nutrition that we aren't aware of. This is her specialty, after all. There are a good number of things that could get by us but wouldn't her."

Lisa stared at her hands in her lap.

"Princess?" her father asked after the silence had stretched to a full minute.

"Okay," Lisa agreed. "I'll go see Dr. Torrence."

"And you'll follow the instructions she gives you?"

Lisa pushed out of her chair and turned to walk out of the office. One hand on the doorknob, the other hidden in the pocket of her sequin-decorated jeans jacket so that they couldn't see that she had crossed her fingers, Lisa nodded. "I'll follow them," she lied.

Chapter 7



While Lisa was at her parents' office, Zack was handing his car keys over to his mother.

"I'm sorry to leave you without your wheels," Mrs. Morris said, busily stuffing grocery coupons in her purse. "But I really need to borrow your car if we want to eat this evening."

"No sweat," Zack assured her. "What should I tell the guys at the repair shop if they call about your car, Mom?"

Mrs. Morris looked thoughtful. "I wouldn't mind if you told them I was at my lawyer's office instead of the grocery store. Make it sound serious, too, won't you, dear? I'd like them to be worried, considering they told me I'd have the car back yesterday."

When Zack just looked at her in astonishment, his mother laughed. "Zachary Morris. From who-

do you think you inherited your scanning abilities?"

"Uncle Josh?" Zack ventured.

Mrs. Morris sniffed. "He's an amateur compared to me, sweetheart. I'll be back in a couple of hours."

She backed Zack's Mustang convertible out onto the street and was half a block away when the phone rang.

"Figures," Zack mumbled, running to answer it.

It wasn't the mechanics, though. It was Lani Alcon with good news.

"It's all set," she assured him. "We start shooting tomorrow."

"On a Saturday?"

"Hey, count your blessings, kid," Lani said. "I had to pull strings on the scheduling as well so you wouldn't have to miss school."

"Oh," Zack said, then added belatedly, "thanks."

"I figured your parents wouldn't be too thrilled if you skipped," she told him. "Am I right?"

"Megaright," Zack murmured.

"Great. But before we can begin, I need you to get your tail down here right now to Oppenheimer's studio to sign employment forms."

"Right now? This minute?"

"Yesterday would have been better, but I didn't get the go-ahead until a few minutes ago," Lani said. "Should I tell Seymour you'll be here in half an hour?"

Half an hour? It was impossible without his car

"What happens if I can't get there that fast?" Zack asked, hoping she'd tell him it wasn't a problem.

"Then you're out, and the hunk I saw in the waiting room a little while ago is in," Lani said. "Sorry, but that's the way it goes. Just make it to the office."

Zack. This is an opportunity you just can't pass up." The heck with the opportunity! What he didn't want to miss out on was the cash being paid for just a few hours' work. Combined with the money his grandfather had recently given him toward college, it would make a very nice down payment on that red Ferrari he'd been dreaming about.

"I'll be there," Zack promised.

As soon as Lani hung up, Zack dialed Jessie next door. There was no answer. So much for borrowing her car. Who else could he bum a ride from? Keith occasionally was able to use her mother's car but today hadn't been one of those days. Screech had a ten-speed bike rather than a car, and considering the way she had stalked away from the gang at lunch, he didn't think Lisa was talking to any of them at the moment. That left Slater and his beat-up truck.

Well, appearances weren't everything. Especially since up one at Oppenheimer's would see the vehicle in which he arrived. Tomorrow, though, he would have to reclaim his carefully cared-for Mustang classic.

When Zack called him, Slater answered on the first ring.

"I need a favor," Zack blurted out. "And I need it fast!"

"Whoa," Slater murmured.

Zack could almost see his friend's grin.

"I don't know, preppie," Slater drawled. "My gas tank is nearly on empty, and I need an oil change before I put too many more miles on my truck."

"I'll fill the gas tank," Zack offered.

"Mmm, I don't know. I'm worried about the oil levels."

"Oil, too," Zack insisted. "Highest grade, as much as you want. I just have to be at Xavier Oppenheimer's office in—" He glanced at his watch. "In less than twenty-five minutes, or I'm out big money."

"Ah!" Slater sighed. "That puts a whole new spin on the thing. I'll be there in five minutes."

"Make it faster," Zack urged.

"Speeding tickets not only look bad on my driving record, they'll make us late," Slater said.

"Five minutes, then. Just slow up outside my house and I'll jump in."

Slater was chuckling when Zack dropped the phone back on the cradle.

▲ ▼ ▲
"You made it," Lani said as Zack dashed in the back door with a minute to spare.

"Barely," he gasped, and collapsed on one of the living-room sofas. "Where's Seymour?"

"Around." Lani strolled over to a desk and picked

up a folder. "Everything's in here, so just work your way—"

Zack glanced up when she didn't finish her sentence. Slater had just pushed open the door and strolled in from the corridor.

Lani looked his friend up and down, lingering on his pumped muscles the same way the girls of Bayside did. Lani even had the same dazed look on her face.

"Can I help you?" she asked.

Her voice sounded like a jungle cat's purring.

Slater's dimples flashed. "Just waiting for my buddy here," he said, indicating Zack's collapsed form on the sofa.

"Hum," Lani purred again. "So you're a friend of Zack? How do you do? I'm Lani Alcoa, Xavier's assistant."

She offered her hand to Slater, who enclosed it in his own and shook it. "A. C. Slater. Nice to meet you, Ms. Alcoa."

Lani gazed at him silently a moment.

A bit confused and uneasy, Slater glanced down at Zack. Zack shrugged his shoulders. He didn't know what was going on, either.

"Ever do any modeling, A. C.?" Lani asked.

"Modeling?" Slater smiled widely, clearly amused at the idea. "Not me. That's for girls to do and me to admire."

"Don't you think girls should have an equal

opportunity to have something to admire?" Lani asked.

Slater looked confused. "Huh?"

Lani's lips curved in a small grin. "Shouldn't women have the same rights? Shouldn't they be able to have pictures of men to enjoy looking at?"

Slater glanced at Zack. "I suppose," he said. "Course they do have them. Like that poster Kelly had of her actor friend."

"Mitch," Zack growled beneath his breath.

Lani heard him, though. "Mitch? Mitch Tobias?"

"Yeah," Slater said. "You heard of him?"

"So you've seen how girls react to his picture?" she asked.

"They went nuts," Slater told her. "I couldn't see why, although the babe on the poster with him wasn't bad."

Lani's smile widened a bit. "The babe, huh?"

Sensing that his friend might be getting into hot water, Zack hastily scribbled his name on all the sheets in the folder—he wasn't going to miss out on his job just because Slater insulted Xavier's assistant—and stood up. "Here you are, Lani. Everything signed as requested. What time do you want me to report for duty tomorrow?"

"Six a.m. at Smuggler's Cove," she said. "If you're interested, A. C., tag along with Zack. I'll bring another set of employment forms in case you want to pose, too."

Slater laughed out loud. "Me? A model?"

"Why not? You've got the right look," Lani insisted. "With your dark hair and Zack's blond, I think you'd be a terrific team."

The sound of someone trotting across the carpet saved Slater from having to answer immediately.

"Did I hear someone say they needed a model?" Screech asked. "You have only to ask, and I'm your man." He struck a pose similar to that of a Greek statue, only with Screech's long thin arms, shallow chest, and wild hair, it didn't look quite as impressive.

"She hasn't asked you, though, Screech," Zack pointed out.

"That's just because she didn't know I was available," Screech insisted. He looked to Lani. "Right?"

"Uh, right," she murmured. "I'd use you, but you aren't quite the type we're looking for on this shoot."

"Really?" Screech assumed a thoughtful expression. "What type am I exactly?"

To keep from glancing straight at him, Lani took the folder of papers from Zack and sorted through them. "Probably a cover model for a novel," she said. "In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if someone thought you were perfect for the cover of a science fiction or horror book."

"Wow!" Screech breathed, clearly impressed.

"Unfortunately," Lani hastened to add, "we do book covers here at Oppenheimer's."

"Too bad," Screech said, and shook his head.

"Just in case you hear of an opening elsewhere, you've got my photograph on file."

She looked surprised. "We do?"

"He means you have his senior picture," Zack explained. "Did you just finish your session, Screech?"

Screech nodded. "You'll have lots of great shots to choose from," he assured Lani.

"I'm sure I will," she said faintly before she turned back to Zack. "I'll see you in the morning."

"At the crack of dawn," he answered, and catching Slater's eye, jerked his head toward the door. Together they dragged Screech out of the office.

"I'm impressed," Screech told his friends after the elevator doors slid closed behind them. "Just imagine it. Two of my best friends are models."

Slater held up his hand. "Not so fast there, pencil-neck. I'm not in this. It's Zack's show, and I'm sure he doesn't want to share it with me."

"That's for sure," Zack muttered.

"Why not, Slater?" Screech demanded. "Models make good money."

"Only as long as they're working," Zack hastened to add. "They don't exactly have regular paychecks. Look, we know that from when the girls were in those fashion shows."

Screech held up his hand. "Ah, but those were fashion shows, not photo shoots. And the girls also volunteered; they weren't hired to be in them."

"True," Zack said.

"It's different with guys," Screech announced.

"And how do you know?" Slater asked.

"Research," Screech said. "I've investigated quite a few careers, you know, but I haven't made up my mind which one to pursue yet."

Slater stared at Zack. "So, just how much are you making as a model tomorrow, preppie?"

Zack glanced at the lighted floor numbers above the door. He studied the ceiling. "Uh, are you guys as starved for a burger as I am? What do you say we head for the Max. I'll even buy!"

"That much, huh?" Slater mused. "Maybe I will tag along with you."

Zack glared at Screech. "Thanks a lot," he growled.

"My pleasure," Screech assured him with a bright, somewhat goofy grin. "You know, I think I'll have a Mega Max-imum Burger. Those seaweed-and-peanut-butter sandwiches I had for lunch just didn't fill the inner man."

Chapter 8



Lisa sat at the table that had been set up outside the gym. Behind her on the wall was a large banner urging all Bayside students to order a poster of their favorite student. It included a blowup of Zack's handsome, beaming face. Luckily, she couldn't see it unless she turned around, though at the moment she was forced to listen to him on the school intercom.

"Have a special friend you never see enough of?" he asked. "Have a secret crush? Then help Bayside replace the horrors of the halls. No, not the hall monitors. I'm talking about the metal monsters from the Jurassic age. You think you've seen replicas of dinosaurs in museums? Well, you can see the real thing if you just look closely at any Bayside locker.

"For the meager price of ten bucks you can own a poster of your best friend or of the person you wish was your best friend. Head for the booth outside the gym now and sign up for a poster of your favorite hunk or babe. What?"

Zack's voice faded away to be replaced by Mr Belding's. "He means you can request a poster of the student of your choice, don't you, Zack?"

"Er, yeah. Anyway, folks, this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance, not to mention a limited time offer. Time's a wastin', so hurry on down. The lovely Lisa Turtle is on duty at the moment and eager to empty your pockets. The equally lovely Ronald Noland is assisting Lisa."

Next to her the totally nerdy Ronnie Noland grinned widely.

"Hey," he said. "I'm lovely."

"You're something," Lisa muttered. "Get away from me, geek. When the crowds come, I'll handle the money, you handle the paperwork."

Ronnie saluted, managing to knock his thick glasses off. He had to scramble on the floor to find them. He was a member of the chess club and idolized the Three Stooges.

Why couldn't Jessie have teamed her up with somebody gorgeous? Lisa wondered. Somebody like Keith Bockman, who was a hunk and a half.

"Hi, Lisa," Keith Bockman said, stepping up to the table.

"Hi," Lisa said softly, thinking he was just a daydream and not real.

"I waited to order a poster until you were working the booth," Keith said.

"Really?" Ronnie jumped to his feet, knocking over his chair in his rush to help their first customer. "Okay, all you have to do is—"

Lisa frowned at her assistant. Wasn't it bad enough that she had to share airspace with this nerd, much less share her pleasant daydream with him? "I'll handle this," she told Ronnie, and turned back to Keith. "So, who are you interested in getting a poster of? Kelly Kapowski? Her picture is our best-seller."

Keith grinned. He had a devastating cleft in his chin, Lisa realized. His skin was a warm bronze tone, and his hair was as inky black as a moonless night in the woods.

Lisa sighed with pleasure.

"I'm not interested in getting Kelly's picture," Keith said.

"No?" Lisa thought a moment. "Daisy Tyler's poster is pretty popular, too," she offered.

"I don't want Daisy's, either," Keith said, and reached in his back pocket for his wallet. "Actually, I get a bit stupid doing this. You see, my godmother said about the posters, and she wants one of me."

Beneath his tan, Lisa realized that Keith was smiling.

How sweet!

And how terrible! He could have requested a poster of her, Lisa thought, then remembered that no one could get a poster of her yet since she hadn't had her photograph taken.

It wouldn't be much longer until she did, though. She had doubled the amount of time she spent working out with the videos and the equipment and had cut her food intake in half. The last was the hardest since her parents were making a big deal about having family dinners every night. They said it was to keep up-to-date on her activities at school, but Lisa knew it was to ensure that she followed the nutritionist's suggested diet. Little did they know the trick she had resorted to to make it appear that she ate a balanced meal. She could cut her food up into really small pieces and then move it around on her plate. In reality, most of her dinner ended up in a heavy-duty paper napkin on her lap. Since it was her job to clear the table each night, getting rid of the uneaten food was simple.

"It's really nice of you to get your godmother a poster," Lisa told Keith. "It's a really nice picture, too. We've sold a number of them."

"You have?"

Ronnie bobbed back into the conversation. "You're second only to A. C. Slater," he said.

"Gosh! I don't know what to say," Keith exclaimed. "I mean, I would have thought Zack Morris's poster would be pretty popular among the girls."

"I saw one of Zack's in the teacher's lounge," Ronnie volunteered. "But I'll bet whoever bought it will have to get another one."

"Why?" Lisa asked.

"Well, someone had drawn a mustache on it, and there were horns coming out of his head. Somebody's probably pretty ticked off that it was defaced like that."

"I doubt that very much," Lisa murmured.

Ronnie rattled his order blanks. "So you want just one poster of yourself then, Keith?" he asked. "We can't interest you in anybody else's picture?"

Keith looked thoughtful. "I didn't see everybody's senior picture on the board yet," he said. "Does that mean not all the seniors agreed to release their photos?"

"Not necessarily," Lisa told him. "The studio could only handle a certain number of student sittings without disrupting their regular business, so we get a few new photographs every day. Are you looking for someone in particular?"

Keith blushed a deeper red than before. "Well, yes, kind of."

Mentally, Lisa went through the list of student pictures. Which girls' portraits were still missing? Who among them was the object of Keith's affection? Whoever she was had to be drop-dead gorgeous. And smart and witty, with the most charming personality in the world. So who was this mystery girl?

There was only one way to find out.
 "Who are you looking for?" Lisa boldly asked.
 "We can let you know when the picture will be available."

"No, that's all right. I'll just keep looking for it and order it later," Keith said. "Here's ten dollars for my godmother's present."

Ronnie grabbed the money and slapped it down on the table in front of Lisa.

She was going to have to have a girl-to-girl talk with Jessie. Lisa decided. The next time her friend teamed her up with a nerd, she was going to murder her.

"Er, well, I've got to be going," Keith announced, although Lisa thought he was a bit hesitant about doing so.

"We'll let you know when the poster is ready to pick up," Ronnie said.

"Great. Well, see ya," Keith said, nodding at Lisa. Then he walked off down the hall.

Lisa got to her feet and glared at Ronnie. Fortunately, he wasn't a very tall boy, so she could give him her steeliest look eye to eye. "Listen up, geek," she told him, accenting each of the words with a poke of her finger in the center of his chest. "The next time you interfere with one of my sales, I'm going to see to it that the football team uses you as a tackle dummy. You get the idea?"

Ronnie swallowed loudly, his Adam's apple rattling

and falling as he gulped. "Yes, ma'am, Ms. Turtle."

Lisa smiled faintly at him. "That's better. Just keep your distance."

Ronnie rubbed his chest as if babying a bruise. "Yes, ma'am. Whatever you say."

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Before Lisa could catch them spying on her, Jessie and Kelly ducked back around a corner.

"I don't like this," Kelly said. "That is not our Lisa."

"Boy, is that ever true," Jessie agreed. "I think Keith is the only person who has escaped without having his head bitten off lately."

"Lucky Keith," Kelly murmured.

"We've got to do something to make Lisa see the truth about herself," Jessie said.

"But what? She won't listen to any of us, and we can't shadow her every movement. Heck, we hardly ever see Lisa outside of school anymore. She never comes to the Max."

"Well, that's good, actually, since we haven't been able to keep the guys from eating burgers there," Jessie admitted.

"At least we were successful with their lunch trays. Zack was nearly hungry enough to eat Ms. Meadows's famous broccoli casserole today, and you know how he hates broccoli!" Kelly said.

Jessie grinned. "Yeah, I know." She giggled. "He actually tasted it, didn't he?"

Kelly laughed. "And did you see the face he made? I wish we had a picture of that."

"Yeah, in poster size."

Kelly groaned. "Don't remind me of posters. I've been so busy working on this project. Here it was Zack's brainstorm, and he's never around to help with all the details."

"Neither is Slater," Jessie said. "I put them both down on the schedule to work the order booth, and they squirmed out of it with some really lame excuse about needing to work."

"Work out, you mean," Kelly corrected. "They spend all their time in the gym pumping iron."

Jessie looked surprised. "Even Zack? I know Slater's addicted to lifting weights—"

"Well, he has to to keep in shape for football and wrestling," Kelly pointed out.

"—but I never thought I'd see Zack doing the same thing," Jessie finished.

"Isn't that just like men?" Kelly said. "Never around when you need them most. Here we are stuck with the locker fund project just when we need to be concentrating on Lisa and her problems."

Jessie nodded. "It isn't just that she's obsessing about her weight. Her whole personality is changing, and not for the better."

"But what can we do?" Kelly demanded.

"Only one thing to do," Jessie said. "Follow me."

Kelly had to take a couple of skipping steps to

catch up with her friend's long-legged stride. "Where are we going?"

Jessie tossed a smile back over her shoulder. "We're going to beard the guys in their precious den," she announced. "We're going to the weight room."

Chapter 9



Slater looked great in his gym shorts and muscle shirt as he calmly finished a round of sit-ups. Next to him, Zack was dressed much the same, but instead of moving smoothly in sync with Slater's even tempo, Zack lay flat on his back, arms flung out, his chest rising and falling quickly with each of his gasping breaths.

"Too much for you, preppie?" Slater asked, giving his friend a superior kind of smile.

"Oh no, no. I just didn't want you to look bad as I decided to hold back," Zack insisted faintly.

Jessie and Kelly moseyed up to the guys.

"Jeez, talk about your barbaric contests," Jessie murmured. "What are you trying to do, kill each other?"

Kelly giggled. "If so, I think Slater's winning.

Zack looks like he's ready to kick the bucket."

"That's me. Ready to shuffle off this mortal coil," Zack mumbled.

Jessie's eyes widened. "Whoa! I'm impressed. Was that Shakespeare?"

"I've no idea. Probably just the curse of Mrs. Simpson's English class," he said, and groaned.

"What is this all about, anyway?" Kelly asked. "You aren't going nuts on us like Lisa is, are you?"

Slater snorted. "Heck, no. This pain is for cold cash. We're working as models."

"Models?" the girls repeated in unison, then burst out giggling.

The guys exchanged long-suffering looks and waited for Jessie and Kelly to get control of themselves.

It only took a minute, but when the girls had calmed down and turned back to Zack and Slater, they ended up going into new peals of laughter.

"What's so funny about us being models?" Slater groaned.

Jessie dropped down on the exercise mat, sitting cross-legged before Slater. Kelly curled up at Zack's side and brushed back a lock of his tousled blond hair.

"Well, you just don't seem the type to be taken in by a scam like that," Jessie said.

Slater's eyes narrowed. "What do you mean by that?"

"First, tell me how you got suckered into this," Jessie insisted. "Was it at Xavier Oppenheimer's studio?"

"Yeah," Slater drawled, and turned a suspicious glare on Zack's prone form.

"Was it Mr. Oppenheimer himself who suggested you would be a great model?" Kelly asked. "Or was it someone else?"

Zack pushed up on his elbows. "You mean you actually met Mr. Oppenheimer? I thought his staff was taking all the seniors' pictures."

"He took mine," Kelly said.

"And mine," Jessie volunteered.

"Mine, too," Slater said. "Why? Didn't he take yours, preppie?"

"No," Zack admitted, a bit disgruntled. "I forgot to turn in my appointment form so I went down there and scammed—" He glanced at Kelly sitting calmly at his side, belatedly remembering he wasn't supposed to be scamming anymore. "I mean, I managed to get an appointment right then and Lani—"

"Who's Lani?" Kelly asked innocently.

Slater leaned toward her. "Lani is this gorgeous brunette. She's Mr. Oppenheimer's assistant and—"

Zack cleared his throat loudly.

Slater grinned at him. "Want to tell the story yourself, preppie?"

"Yes, why don't you, Zack," Kelly urged, folding her arms across her chest.

Uh-oh. He was in trouble.

"First of all, it isn't a scam," he insisted. "Slater and I both signed contracts with Oppenheimer's studio. We're being paid a mega-amount of money to do this."

"Hmm." Jessie tapped a finger against her lips in thought. "What exactly did it say?"

Zack got a cornered look on his face. "Er, I was in a hurry so I didn't read it," he confessed.

Jessie cocked her head. "Slater?"

"There wasn't time to study it before the shoot at Saturday. The sunrise was gorgeous, and they wouldn't wait to start. They would have lost the light."

"Very convenient of them," Jessie mused. "Has either of you got a copy of the contract handy?"

Slater fished in his gym bag and pulled out a crumpled, sand-sprinkled sheet of paper and handed it to Jessie.

Kelly shook her head slowly. "I'm surprised at you, Zack Morris. I really thought the scammeister of the side would see through a trick like this."

Zack sat up all the way, splining so that he faced her. He took her hand in his. "I guess I'm rusty," he said. "You hate my scams so much, I've been trying not to run any."

Kelly squeezed his hand. "I know."

"It's really hard, Kelly. I didn't think it would be, but scamming is part of my genetic makeup. It's in my DNA."

"Hub?"

Zack sighed loudly. "I know it sounds pretty lame, but I only found out recently that scamming is an inherited trait."

Kelly pulled her hand from his grasp and gave him a disgusted look. "Zack Morris. That is really dumb. Your father was valedictorian of his class at Bayside, and he's a very serious and dedicated businessman. And there isn't a sweeter person alive than your mom."

"You don't really know Mom very well," Zack said.

"I suppose you came up with this lame excuse so that I wouldn't get mad at you the next time you pulled a scam," Kelly insisted hotly.

"Yes, I mean, no! I'm just . . . that is, I wanted to . . ." Zack sputtered.

"Ah-ha!" Jessie shouted. "Found it! If you moron would take the time to read documents before you sign them you wouldn't get into spots like this."

"I didn't even know we were in a spot," Slater said.

"Well, you are," Jessie insisted. "Look here." She stabbed a finger at Slater's contract. "It says that all photographs taken of you immediately become the property of Lani Alcoa. Please note that it says Lani Alcoa, not Xavier Oppenheimer."

Slater, Zack, and Kelly all stared at her blankly.

"That means he's reputable but she isn't. So

pulled a scam on you," Jessie explained. "According to this, you only get paid if any of the photographs she takes of you are sold, and if none of them sell, then you owe her a couple hundred dollars for doing a professional photo shoot."

Slater grabbed the contract away from her. "That can't be right."

"It's all there," Jessie said. "It's just disguised in legal talk."

"Boyl" Slater grumbled. "Just when I thought preppie was on to a good thing."

"Hey! I didn't talk you into doing this," Zack reminded him.

"True," Slater admitted. "So it's Screech I've got to pulverize."

"Screech!" Jessie echoed. "Don't tell me Screech got suckered into this, too."

Slater grinned. "Not exactly. Lani wouldn't take him on. Say!" A thoughtful expression brightened his face. "That ought to show that this isn't a scam, after all."

"That's right," Zack agreed. "If I was running a scam of this sort"—he glanced hastily at Kelly—"which of course I am not, Screech is just the kind of sucker I'd want to sign on. Let's face it, there is no way she could sell photographs of Screech to anyone. Heck, she told him the only thing his picture might ever appear on was the cover of a sci-fi book."

"Well, there you go," Jessie said. "There was the

outside shot that she might sell a photo, and she couldn't risk that."

Kelly nodded. "Screech is just the kind of person to go out and find his own buyer, too. He loves science fiction novels and goes to all those conventions."

"Well, we could do that, too," Zack suggested. "I mean, look at how well my senior picture is selling."

"Actually," Kelly said, "Screech's is selling better than yours. All the nerd girls are buying it as well as all the members of the chess club and the Dungeons and Dragons club."

Slater's mouth dropped open. "The nerd girls are buying Screech's poster?"

"Why not?" Jessie asked. "To them, he's a hunk."

"Screech a hunk?" Zack murmured faintly. "I don't feel so well." He toppled over backward to lie flat on the exercise mat once more.

"Oh, don't be so dramatic," Kelly insisted. "Screech is sweet."

"He's sweet," Zack muttered tragically.

Jessie dusted her hands and got to her feet in one smooth, graceful movement. "Since my work here is done, I think I'll redo the poster booth schedule so that Zack and Slater can catch up on their volunteer work."

Zack sat up abruptly. "Who says we're available? Lani is expecting us at Smuggler's Cove at sundown."

"You aren't honestly planning to go now that you know these photo shoots are just a trick," Jessie said.

Kelly looked up at Jessie. "But what if the pic-

tures do sell?" she asked. "Wouldn't the guys both make an indecent amount of money?"

"A very indecent amount," Zack added.

"Well, yes, but—"

"All right!" Zack was on his feet in a flash. "Come on, Slater. We've got time for a shower and a burger before we have to meet Lani."

"Wait just a minute, preppie. I'm not so sure about this anymore," Slater said.

"It'll work out," Zack promised. "You see, we've already got an edge here."

"We do?" Slater didn't sound too sure about trusting his friend again.

"Yeah. And do you know why?" Zack draped his arm around Slater's shoulders.

Slater frowned and shrugged free from his friend's arm.

"Because, my friend, if what Jessie says is legally binding, then Lani has got to cough up a handsome fee," Zack explained. "Jessie, was there a date on that contract? Did it specify photographs taken just at the beach location?"

"Nnnooo," Jessie said carefully. "Just what are you up to, Morris?"

Kelly grinned widely and linked arms with Zack. "Mr. Oppenheimer took our photographs but Lani took your senior picture, didn't she. And we're already selling posters of you for the locker fund drive. That's the catch, isn't it?"

Zack chuckled. "That's the catch," he agreed.

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Lisa slid behind the wheel of her car and stared straight ahead at the back side of the bleachers around the Bayside football field. Only she didn't see the graying boards. She saw Keith Bockman walking away from the poster booth. And not looking back at her.

It would have been all right if he'd glanced over his shoulder as he left. Or winked. Or waved. Anything to show that he was interested in her. Or liked her. Or was interested in liking her.

Lisa's long nails tapped nervously against the steering wheel. She'd never been in this kind of spot before. Dates had usually been easy to get. All she had to do was decide whom she wanted to go out with and then smile at them encouragingly, and as if they'd read her mind, the guys had always asked her out.

Only she'd been dying to date Keith for weeks now, and he still hadn't gotten the idea to ask her out. She'd smiled and smiled and smiled. She'd thought happy dating thoughts directly at him. And he hadn't gotten the idea.

Or maybe he had and after seeing how fat she was, he decided no way!

That had to be it.

Oh, sure, Kelly thought Keith liked Lisa but that he was shy and just hadn't worked up his courage to ask her out. But that couldn't really be the case. He

had talked with her at the poster booth for quite a while. It would have been easy to say "Lisa, would you like to go to a movie?" Or maybe "Lisa, would you go for a walk on the beach with me?" Even something as simple and old-fashioned as "Lisa, could I carry your books to class for you?" Anything to make her feel special, to make her feel like he was even a little interested in her.

If only . . . wait! Keith *had* said something sweet!

Lisa did a fast rewind on her memory, letting everybody who had come to the poster booth while she and Ronnie were working zip through her mind. They all walked backward, of course, as befitted a rewind. Then there was Keith, grinning slightly at her, taking his money back from Ronnie, running backward to disappear around a corner in the hallway. Lisa hit her mental stop button.

Keith strolled up to the table again, his every movement a work of athletic grace. Pure art. Lisa *oohed* in appreciation.

"Hi, Lisa," the Keith on the memory replay *murmured*.

Oh, he did have a wonderful-sounding voice. It was husky and deep, not like that of the other boys at all.

"Hi," Lisa murmured out loud, as if the mental picture could hear her.

"I waited to order a poster until you were working the booth," Keith said once again.

Lisa groaned with pleasure at the thought.

He had waited. He did like her!

A happy smile curved her lips. She started the car and headed home. Keith liked her. All was right with the world.

Unfortunately, the playback in her mind continued to run.

She remembered how Keith's dark brows drew together over his nose as he frowned slightly in thought. "I didn't see everybody's senior picture on the board yet," he said.

He must have been looking for her picture, Lisa decided. Well, there was just one thing to do and that was to get her photograph taken. As soon as she got home she'd see if she could get into Izzy's outfit. If she could, even if it was just barely, next stop was Oppenheimer Studios.

A half hour later Lisa was standing before her full-length mirror, a wide grin stretching her face as she admired the way she looked in the special, soft, peach-colored two-piece dress. Although the scale said she still had two pounds to lose, she had reached the goal of fitting into the dress of her dreams for her senior picture.

Lisa turned slowly, checking the way she looked from all angles. The fabric draped perfectly. The color made her skin glow.

She was her old self again. Her nicely curved self.

Lisa executed a neat pirouette in celebration.

She halted suddenly as a new thought hit her. What if Keith hadn't been interested in getting her poster? What if it was a different girl's poster he wanted hanging on his wall?

Lisa dropped down on her bed as despair rushed over her once more.

That had to be it. Keith was interested in someone else, not in her.

But who?

One of the cheerleaders?

Naw. They weren't his type. In the past Keith had dated girls like Suzy Dane, who was a member of the swim team, and Janet Hazeltoff, a long-distance runner. Both of them were extremely trim from constant exercise. Both were honor roll students and had already been awarded athletic scholarships to out-of-state universities. They were smart and they were in shape and they were . . .

More muscular than they were curvy. Lisa stared at her reflection again. No wonder Keith hadn't asked her out. It wasn't because he didn't like smart girls—such she was—because he had dated smart girls. It wasn't because she was fat, because she wasn't anymore. She was back to being the Lisa she had been.

Except that that Lisa wasn't Keith's ideal woman.

Lisa's eyes drifted to where her athletic equipment sat in the middle of her bedroom floor. There was no reason why she couldn't become Keith's ideal

woman. She had the machines, a zillion exercise videos, and the momentum from her frantic drive to lose weight. She could do it.

A moment later she had stripped off Izzy's lovely dress and wiggled into an electric blue leotard. Once more she stood before the mirror evaluating herself.

Why had she ever thought boys liked girls to be curvy? Look at all the Bayside girls who were as thin as toothpicks and who dated like crazy. Heck, look at Jessie and Kelly. Curves didn't mean a thing. And now that she looked really close at her own, there were definitely too many of them. They needed to be honed down, her muscles toned up. Curves! Who needed them? Runway models certainly didn't have them. If she decided to go into fashion design as a career, wouldn't it be better if she were as thin as the women who modeled gowns for the top designers the world over?

Lisa pinched the skin at her waist. There was definitely another inch to get rid of there. And if it was there, it was everywhere else as well.

But not for long, she vowed silently. Even if she never managed to date Keith, she needed to be in far better shape for her future. She was a senior, after all. Next year was college. She would be one step closer to a career.

Now was the time to get ready for it. Now was the time to work hard to become the ultrathin woman she needed to be.

Carefully, Lisa hung Izzy's design back on the hanger. This time, instead of hanging it where she could see it and be inspired by it, Lisa tucked the dress in her closet and shut the door. She didn't need it as a reminder anymore. She had a glowing mental picture of her rosy future as a guide now.

And maybe, just maybe, the memory of how Keith looked when he had grinned shyly down at her that afternoon.

Chapter 10



After Kelly and Jessie left the guys, they wandered off to the Max for yogurt shakes. Zack and Slater weren't the only ones suffering from the strict lunch edict. Even though Jessie was a vegetarian herself, she'd made sure she cut back on the amount she was eating in front of Lisa and was feeling weak from the pure-hearted effort.

"I can't believe the guys were taken in by that woman," Jessie mused, sipping on her strawberry shake.

Kelly slurped up some of her chocolate drink. "You can't? Come on, Jessie. We're talking about Zack here. If you tell him his looks can make him a fortune, he'll believe you every time."

"But Slater?"

"Excuse me, but whose poster is selling the most copies at school?" Kelly asked.

Jessie groaned. "Slater's, and he's loving every minute of it."

Kelly grinned. "Zack isn't."

"I'll never understand this competition. Who cares whose poster is the most popular?"

"Yeah," Kelly said. "And who cares whose grade point average makes them valedictorian?"

Jessie grimaced, recognizing herself as the one abid to be the top student in the graduating class. "Oh. But that's about hard work and intelligence. It's different."

"Not to everyone. Looking good and being popular are more important to some people. Especially the looking good part," Kelly said.

"Like Lisa right now," Jessie agreed. "Well, since we didn't manage to pry Zack and Slater loose from their modeling, I guess we'll have to think of some other way to get the time we need to convince Lisa she's obsessing."

"If we can," Kelly murmured. "Maybe we can find other volunteers to take our place at the booth."

"I bet Babette Neidermeyer would be willing to handle the accounting duties. She's already the class treasurer, so she has experience with money."

"Good choice," Jessie said. "Do you think any of the cheerleaders would be willing to give us some of

their time? I never have trouble finding volunteers among the nerds and the geeks, but the rest of the students always come up with reasons why they can't volunteer."

"I'll take care of it," Kelly promised. "In fact, I'll talk to Babette as well, so you can devote all your time to Lisa's problem."

Jessie wrinkled her nose. "Like she's really going to welcome me as her shadow."

Kelly shook her head and grinned across the table at her friend. "That's not what I mean, Jessie. We need some research done so we understand more about eating disorders. I don't know anyone who knows her way around a library better than you do."

"You think that's what this is then? Not just a mad effort to lose a few pounds so she can get into Izzy's outfit?" Jessie asked.

"Oh, I think it just started out as wanting to do that," Kelly agreed, "but she passed that stage a long time ago. I mean, look at her. She is losing weight, but she's also losing her temper a lot."

Jessie played with the straw, twirling it back and forth in her shake. "She's not only not eating right. I'll bet she isn't sleeping much, either."

"You're probably right. She's obviously using more concealer cream under her eyes," Kelly said. "She's trying to hide the dark circles."

"Okay. I'll head for the library while you find replacements on the poster committee." Jessie looked

down at her half-full glass. Kelly hadn't finished her chocolate shake, either. "I really shouldn't have the rest of this," Jessie said.

Kelly stared down at her glass. "Me neither," she murmured.

Neither of them made an effort to push the shakes aside or to get up.

"Oh, what the heck," Kelly declared, and started slurping on her straw.

Jessie followed her friend's excellent example.

* * *

Jessie was overjoyed to find that Mrs. Cummings, her favorite librarian, was on duty at the reference desk when she arrived at the main branch of the Palisades Library downtown. Whenever possible, Jessie tried to use the main library because their collection of books was so much larger than that at any of the neighborhood branches. Some Bayside students got all their information out of encyclopedias when they had to write a research paper, but Jessie had long ago decided that to follow that trend would not land her in the spotlight come graduation. She wanted to be the senior with the highest grade point average; she wanted to be the valedictorian who addressed the gathered students, parents, and teachers her last day at Bayside.

Mrs. Cummings looked thoughtful when Jessie asked for suggestions on where to look up information about eating disorders.

"There are various kinds," the librarian said. "Are

you interested in particular aspects of the disease or social problems related to it?"

"Anything and everything," Jessie insisted. "I have a friend who is starving herself, and I want to have some ammunition when my friends and I confront her."

"Knock some sense into her, hmm?" Mrs. Cummings said.

Jessie grinned. "Absolutely."

The librarian sat down at her computer and began to key information into it rapidly. One screen after another came up and was rejected as Mrs. Cummings considered the information given. At last she hit the print button.

While the printer hummed through its cycle, Mrs. Cummings turned back to Jessie.

"This should give you a start. It sounds like your friend is suffering from anorexia nervosa."

Ewww! It was even worse than Jessie had suspected. "That sounds serious."

The librarian nodded solemnly. "It's very serious, Jessie. Young women have died from it."

Jessie swallowed tightly. Died? Oh, not Lisa. Not the friend she had known since they were both five years old!

While paper rolled from the reference department's printer, the years rolled back for Jessie.

It was the second day of kindergarten, a really scary time for a child as shy as she had been back

then. The only kid she had known was Zack because he lived next door to her. The idea of sticking close to a boy, though, hadn't appealed to her. Well, it hadn't appealed to Zack, either! He hadn't wanted her hanging around him. So Jessie stood alone on the playground watching the other children run and yell, and wished she could be just like them. It seemed as if no one was interested in her. Then suddenly a pretty little girl in peach-colored overalls, a matching shirt, and perky pigtails tied with peach bows had grabbed her hand. "Come on!" the girl had yelled happily. "I'll race you to the swing set!" They were fast friends from that day on.

That little girl was Lisa.

"Here you are, Jessie," the librarian said, handing her the completed printout. "I'm sure you'll have no trouble finding what you need, but if you do, come see me. I hope you manage to help your friend."

Jessie squared her shoulders. Her chin rose to a determined angle. "Oh, I will, Mrs. Cummings. I will."

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It was late when Jessie returned home, her notebook crammed with notes. Her hand felt like it would never straighten out again. She'd go through life with a crooked as if holding a pencil. But it would be worth it if what she'd learned helped Lisa.

Kelly answered the phone on the first ring. She'd probably been sitting next to it, Jessie figured.

"Everything is all set with the poster committee," Kelly announced. "I did some rescheduling so that boys interested in certain girls got a chance to work with them and vice versa."

Jessie chuckled. "You'll end up being known as the Bayside matchmaker if these couples click."

Kelly giggled. "I just hope they remember they're supposed to be selling posters. What did you find out?"

Jessie sobered. "Nothing very good," she admitted. "In fact, everything is downright scary!"

"Ewww. Like what?" Kelly asked.

"Well, to begin with, Lisa is probably suffering from anorexia nervosa."

"Oh, gosh!" Kelly breathed. "That can be fatal!"

"Lisa's exactly the type of girl most likely to get it," Jessie said. "Not only is she a teenager, but she's healthy, cute, and her parents are both professional successful."

"Whoa."

"There's more," Jessie warned, and leafed over a few pages in her notebook. "Anorexics are usually involved in a lot of social activities, and they want to please their family, friends, and teachers."

"Uh-oh."

"Not only are their families usually small but a lot of times the anorexic is an only child."

"Boy, am I glad I've got scads of brothers and sisters," Kelly murmured.

"It gets worse. Usually their parents are older when they start their family," Jessie continued. "And Lisa's parents waited until they were finished with medical school and had established their practice before they had her."

"Oh, that's right. But Lisa has always had everything she wanted, and her parents are really wonderful to her. They never demand that she have straight A's or anything," Kelly insisted.

Jessie blew out a breath of air in resignation. "I know. That's what makes this all so scary. That's exactly how the typical family of an anorexic acts!"

"Golly! What can we do to help Lisa?"

Jessie groaned. "That's just it," she said. "I went through dozens of books looking for something to tell me just that. All I found were tales about other girls who wouldn't admit they were starving themselves to death. They don't really see what they look like when they look in the mirror. They just set themselves these horribly high standards that no one can live up to, and fret themselves silly. And it always starts with something traumatic happening in their life."

"Ewww. Like not being able to fit into a designer outfit," Kelly moaned. "Are we really sure that this is anorexia, though, Jessie? I mean, we may be going off the deep end on this. Lisa might just be working toward a simple goal. You know, like being able to wear Izzy's creation."

"We can hope," Jessie agreed. "But I'm not so sure, Kelly. The stuff I read said that anorexia nervosa is really hard to identify when it first begins because the person with it is doing a routine diet to lose a few pounds."

Kelly sighed deeply. "I wouldn't say there has been anything routine about Lisa's diet in a long time."

"I'll say. Did you know that it takes fifteen calories per pound just to maintain your weight each day? And to lose just one pound you have to burn off thirty-five hundred calories?" Jessie said. "The way Lisa's been exercising and not eating, not only will she have shed those ten pounds, she'll be nothing but a skeleton before long."

"We can't let that happen," Kelly insisted. "She has only been this way for a little while, so we should be able to do something to shake her from this obsession she has."

"Yeah," Jessie agreed. "But what?"

"Oh, I don't know," Kelly moaned. "There has to be something."

"There's an organization called the National Association for Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, or ANAD for short, that offers counseling," Jessie said.

"Here in Palisades?"

Jessie sighed. "No. I'll have to do some more

research to find where the closest ANAD office is."

"And in the meantime?" Kelly asked.

"I don't know, Kelly," Jessie admitted sadly. "I just don't know."

Chapter 11



"Hey, Lisa! Wait up!" Kelly called, pushing her way through the crowded Bayside hallway. "Whew! Does this look like everyone is anxious to start their weekend or what?"

"I sure am," Lisa said. "This has been one of the worst weeks of my life!"

"Golly! What happened?"

"Oh, nothing short of a disaster," Lisa insisted. "I was talking to Keith Bockman, and that idiot Ronnie Noland kept poking his nose into the conversation. Keith will probably never talk to me again."

"That's too bad," Kelly murmured.

"Bad? That sounds like a total disaster," Jessie said, joining them. "But don't worry, Lisa. I'm sure that Keith will find another opportunity to talk to you."

"Yeah, right," Lisa growled. "He isn't the least bit interested in me."

"You don't know for sure," Kelly insisted. "I mean, I've noticed that boys act really weird when they really like you."

Lisa sighed deeply. "Oh, he was acting weird all right. He bought a poster for his godmother."

"Of you?" Jessie asked in surprise.

"No, of himself. Mine hasn't been available. At least, not until now," Lisa dug in her purse and pulled out a billfold-size picture.

Kelly and Jessie wasted no time in grabbing it.

"You look gorgeous!" Kelly gushed.

"And Izzy's creation fits like a dream," Jessie told her enthusiastically. "I'm so glad. Now you don't have to be on that nutty diet anymore."

Lisa took her photograph back, tucking it into a pocket deep inside her purse. "What was so nutty about it?" she asked a bit sharply. "It was well thought out, finely executed, and totally balanced."

"Well, yeah, except for the fact that you were depending on all those vitamin supplements and stuff from the health food store a little too much," Jessie said.

"And spending so much time exercising that we hardly ever saw you," Kelly added. "But that's all in the past now, and we can get together a lot again. I really missed our gabfests."

"That's nice," Lisa said, "but I'm not totally satisfied with the way I look yet."

Jessie and Kelly exchanged a horrified glance.

"But you look great!" Kelly lied valiantly. Lisa was withdrawn, tired, really super stressed out. But you couldn't tell a person that. Not and stay friends with them, Kelly thought. Gosh, being supportive was tough.

"At least you can start having lunch again," Jessie said. "I was thinking of bringing mine for a few days. Mom's boyfriend had to break a date with her, and he sent this giant basket of fruit to sort of apologize. It's more than either of us can eat before it spoils, so I thought the whole gang could have a picnic with it on Monday."

"Wow! That's a great idea!" Kelly said, trying to put the same kind of enthusiasm in her voice that she did with each cheer she led at a football game.

"It does sound nice," Lisa said, "but I've found that fruit has too many calories in it."

"Not that many," Jessie insisted. "Heck, based on your height and usual weight, you have to have at least fifteen hundred calories every day to stay healthy."

"Thanks, anyway," Lisa said. "Listen. I've got to run. See you later."

Jessie and Kelly watched their friend stride off down the hall.

"I think blurting out how many calories she needed was a mistake," Kelly said.

"I even cut it down some," Jessie murmured. "And I made up that story about Chance. He'd never

miss one of his dates with Mom. I was going to go buy a bunch of fruit to have on the picnic."

"Too bad Lisa had to run," Kelly said.

"I'll bet she meant that literally, too. Running burns over four hundred fifty calories an hour," Jessie said.

"It does?"

Jessie shrugged. "Well, I've been studying up a bit more."

"Have you come up with any ideas on how we can help her? I mean, ones where neither of us puts our foot in our mouth?" Kelly asked.

"Not so far," Jessie admitted. "I'm so worried about Lisa that I think my brain is working overtime on the problem, but I'm still not getting anywhere."

Kelly nodded thoughtfully. "You aren't devious enough probably."

"Devious?"

"That's what it's going to take to get her attention, isn't it? Some devious plan?"

"Yeah," Jessie agreed. "But we all know who the king of deviousness is, and he's not around."

"He will be," Kelly said. "All I have to do is crook my little finger, and Zack will do whatever I want him to do."

Jessie grinned. "He's still trying to get you to go steady with him again, isn't he?"

"Yes," Kelly said, "and I love the power it gives me."

"So, are you going to go steady with him?"

Kelly tossed her head. "I haven't decided yet."

"Boy, talk about being devious," Jessie said.

"I learned everything I know from the best scammer in Bayside history," Kelly declared proudly. "I'll call you later on to let you know how my campaign is going."

▲ ▼ ▲

Totally unaware of what Kelly had in mind for him, Zack was enjoying all the attention Lani and her technician were giving him. Well, and Slater, too, but that didn't count, Zack decided. He was the one Lani had asked first to pose for her camera. He was the one who was going to hold the upper hand. He was the one who would get paid the really gross amount of money in the end. He could almost see the red Ferrari sitting in his parents' driveway.

Maybe he should talk them into letting him use the garage, and they could park in the driveway and on the street. It was a Ferrari, after all.

"Heads up," Lani called.

Zack smiled automatically at the cue.

And received a bucketful of seawater in his face.

"Hey!" Slater yelled, jumping back. "What's the big idea?"

"The big idea is to look sexy," Lani said, her camera to her eye as she lined up a shot. "Your T-shirts look great, but wet they look even better."

Zack pulled his away from his chilled skin.

"They don't feel so great," he complained.

"Think of the money you'll be making," Lani suggested as she moved around the guys, snapping one picture after another.

Money. That was always a cheering thought, Zack mused.

Lani took some more shots with her camera and then called for another. This one had a bigger lens on it. "Let's try something a little different this time, guys. Run your hands back through your hair to give it a more rugged look."

"I thought I was rugged enough already," Slater mumbled aside to Zack.

"Then take your shirts off," Lani said.

"What!?" Slater snapped.

"Take your shirts off," she repeated. "Hey, these shots will probably be in a calendar. You know the kind. Girls go nuts over hunk calendars. I'll bet you could even get gigs autographing them."

"I don't want a gig autographing calendars," Slater said. "In fact, I'm not so sure I want to be a model anymore."

"Don't be ridiculous," Lani insisted. "This is the beach, A. C. It's only natural to have your shirt off at the beach."

"Not at sundown," Slater argued back. "It gets cold! Especially when a guy is already drenched."

"You'll dry," she said. "Zack, don't you hold back on me. Let's see some of that sun-kissed California skin."

Zack looked at Slater.

"No way," Slater said. "I'm out of here."

Zack sighed. "Now why is it I suddenly feel so cheap?" he asked.

"Must be the company you keep," Slater said, and started up the beach to where his truck was parked.

"Well, I suppose we have played this game long enough," Zack admitted. He turned to face Lani. "You know, this is really a total drag. I'm out of here, too," he told her, and tracked after Slater in the sand.

Lani's expression got cloudy. Majorly cloudy.

"Hey! You two can't just walk off on me. We've got a contract," she yelled after them.

"Chill out, babe," Zack called back. "Our lawyer pointed out a few loopholes in that little piece of paper."

"Your lawyer?" Lani's voice didn't sound quite as confident now.

"Jessie is going to love this," Slater murmured under his breath.

Zack shrugged. "She wants to be a lawyer, doesn't she? I'm just promoting her a little early."

"Yeah, like before she even goes to law school," Slater said.

"Details, just details."

"Zack," Lani called. "I'll cut you a deal. A new deal," she offered.

The guys both stopped walking.

Zack's lips twitched in a satisfied grin. "Now that," he told Slater, "is music to my ears."

"Just so long as you make it music in ~~the pocket~~ as well," Slater said. "You know, the sound of ~~minting~~ coins."

Zack mused a moment. "No, I think I've got a better idea," he said. "Wait here a second. I'll be right back."

Slater grabbed his friend's arm. "You aren't going to do something really dumb, are you?"

Zack plucked Slater's hand from his ~~beepers~~. "Heck, no. I'm going to do something incredibly cool just you watch the master at work, pal, and learn."

"Yeah, right," Slater grumbled, but he waited.

Chapter 12



Kelly stood close to Zack, her hand in his, and gazed at the way the moonlight created glittering, diamond-bright crests on the waves. She sighed softly.

So did Zack. Very contentedly. This was what life was supposed to be like. At least the romantic part of it, he mused. The most wonderful girl in the world at your side, the soft Pacific coast breeze in your hair, and the guarantee of lots of *dinero* in your pocket in the very near future. Zack sighed again, at total peace with the world. He definitely was one happy dude, reveling in his full love quotient.

"Zack?" Kelly murmured.

She turned to him. Drew his hand up until she clasped it between both of hers and his fingertips brushed her breastbone. He could feel the steady beat of her heart. Smell the sweet scent of her flowery perfume.

"Hmm?" he answered.

"I need you," she said.

His own heart did a rapid drumroll of its own.

"You do?"

Kelly's lower lip dipped a moment, then she raised her eyes to look deeply into his. "You're the only one," she whispered.

All right!

"I know that you've been trying not to run any ~~scams~~ since I don't like them," Kelly continued.

He nodded, enjoying the way she gazed up at him, as if he were her knight in shining armor. All he had to do was bend an inch or so and he could be enjoying the taste and feel of her lips as well. It seemed a gazillion years since he'd kissed her. The time was right. The mood was set. Zack moved closer to her.

"But I need you to do a scam right now," Kelly said. "Really fast."

Zack's mouth nearly dropped open.

Kelly sank down to sit on the sand, pulling him with her. "It's Lisa," she said, turning her eyes back to the relaxing sight of waves lapping on the beach.

Zack zoned out for a bit. What had happened here? He had the moon, the stars, the romantic sound of the waves. The sand beneath them was still warm from the sun. Kelly had been looking up at him, eyes gleaming, her lips soft and waiting. And somehow he'd missed something.

"You want me to pull a scam for Lisa?" he croaked, totally confused.

"No," Kelly corrected. "I want you to run a scam on Lisa. She's become deranged or something over her weight."

Remembering all the meager, salad-filled lunches he'd endured in the last few weeks, Zack had to go along with that one. But it wasn't just Lisa, he thought. Kelly and Jessie had browbeaten everyone into eating those totally gross meals.

"Jessie and I think she might be anorexic. Or if she isn't, she will be soon," Kelly said. "She won't listen to us, although I will admit we don't seem to know what to say. And she gets mad so easily these days."

"So what do you want me to do?" Zack asked.

Kelly dropped his hand and waved her arms. "Shake her up! Scare her! I don't know. Just make her see reason. She's on this weird trip where, when she looks in the mirror, she doesn't really see herself, just fat."

"You're kidding. Lisa's one gorgeous dish. Ex. not that I'm interested in her or anything, of course," he hastened to add.

"Well, we've got to convince her that she is beautiful but won't be if she keeps up this frantic exercising and dieting," Kelly said. "And you're the only one of us who has the experience in tricking people into doing what you want them to do."

Zack wasn't sure if that was a compliment or not. Even if he did have a lot of experience doing just that.

The trouble was, all his scams had been things that ended up being good for him. Except the ones where his parents or Mr. Belding caught him, of course. But that didn't happen too much. His scam record was pretty successful. Look at the way the poster campaign was going and his soon to be megaincome from Lani Alcoa.

But there was a profit to be made from getting Lisa back to normal. Kelly would be superhappy with him and might even agree at long last to go steady with him again. That would make life really complete. All he had to do was . . . hmm. No, that couldn't work. But maybe if he . . . hmm. Well, how about . . . nope.

Kelly was looking at him hopefully, trust in his abilities glowing in her eyes. She was so pretty it was hard to concentrate on anything but her. Especially on such a romantic night.

"I'll have to give this some thought," Zack murmured, "but in the meantime . . ." He leaned toward her, intent on kissing her.

Kelly jumped to her feet. "Of course you do," she agreed brightly. "And I know exactly what helps you think best. One of the Max's giant burgers. Come on." She held her hand out to him. "I got paid today, so I'll even buy! You just scam."

"But. . ."

Kelly cocked her head to one side. "But what?"

Zack waved a hand toward the moon, the ocean.

"What about this?"

She glanced quickly at the romantic setting. "Oh, this won't work for Lisa, silly. She needs a special guy to share it with, and she isn't dating anyone in particular right now."

"Well, what about us, then?" Zack demanded. "We could. . ."

"Oh, Zack," Kelly said with a sigh. "You know there isn't time for us to enjoy this. This is a life-and-death situation with Lisa. Come on."

Zack pushed reluctantly to his feet. It was all well and good that Kelly was so confident in his talents, but at the moment Kelly was the only girl on his mind. When it came to Lisa, he was a total blank.

* * *

After watching Zack wolf down a gigantic meal at the Max, Kelly generously gave him a full twelve hours in which to come up with a plan to save Lisa from herself. It meant that Zack didn't sleep much that night. When he did drift off, it was to have nightmares of Kelly thumbing her nose at him for failing her. He woke up abruptly each time she walked off, her arm linked with that of actor Mitch Tobias, who had heroically swung in on a grapevine to rescue Lisa after shedding his shirt at Lani Alcoe's request.

It was not a good night for getting any rest. ♫

was an even worse night to come up with a plan.

When he arrived at the Max at noon, it was with sleep in his eyes and no idea of how to help. Kelly would be megadisappointed in him. Now she'd probably never go out with him again, much less let him kiss her.

Kelly, Slater, and Jessie were already seated in the gang's regular booth, sipping colas and sharing an order of french fries.

Zack dropped into the seat next to Kelly.

"Uh-oh," Jessie said, taking a good look at the circles under his eyes. "This doesn't look good."

Zack groaned and ran his hands back through his hair. "I've been trying to come up with something all night, but all I keep thinking about is how long I've known Lisa and all the things we've done together."

"Oh, me, too," Kelly moaned. "Like when she and I were chosen to plant the Arbor Day tree in third grade."

"Or when I was too shy to ask Barry Slockowitz to the Sadie Hawkins dance in junior high, and she asked him for me," Jessie said.

Slater looked at her with surprise. "You dated Barry Slockowitz? He's a nerd."

"He is not. Besides, it was just once."

"Twice," Kelly corrected.

"I was young and stupid back then," Jessie told Slater. "And you didn't live around here then, either."

She gave Slater a tentative smile, which Zack

noticed his muscle-bound friend chose to ignore. Or pretended to ignore. Mentally, Zack shook his head. He'd never understand Jessie and Slater's relationship. They were either mad about each other or mad at each other. Recently they had been trying to be just friends, but Zack had a feeling that neither of them wanted that. They just hadn't figured out how to fit comfortably into each other's life. At least, not the way he and Kelly fit into each other's life.

Or would once he thought of a scheme to help Lisa.

And if he didn't?

Whoa!

"Well, Lisa was the first one of you guys to be nice to me when my family moved to Palisades," Slater said. "She was the first friend I had here. And for a while, she was the only friend I had."

"Ohhh," Kelly sighed. "That's terrible. Slater I didn't realize that." She reached across the table to squeeze his hand.

Zack gritted his teeth when Slater squeezed her hand back. *Think, Morris! Think!*

"You know," Jessie said, "Screech is the one who will be really crushed if Lisa doesn't snap out of this. I mean, he's worshiped her for years."

"Oh, that's right," Kelly moaned. Her pretty blue eyes glistened with a hint of tears. "No matter how she insults him, he is still devoted to her. Even the few times he's dated someone else, all Lisa had to do

was crook her little finger and Screech would come running to do her bidding."

"That's true love," Jessie agreed, looking a bit weepy herself.

"Where is Screech?" Zack demanded. "Shouldn't he be here?"

"He wasn't home when I called," Kelly said. "I left a message with his mother."

"I'm sure he'll be along any moment," Jessie said.

She'd barely finished speaking when the door of the Max swung open and Screech backed into the restaurant, a video camera to his eye. With him was Thomas Jefferson Racine, the handsome son of Palisades's oldest and most prominent family.

"Tell me about the first date you had with Lisa," Screech urged Jeff.

Jeff's amber eyes crinkled at the corners when he smiled. "It was a bit rocky," he admitted. "I first saw her at the historical society but didn't get to know her until she came up to my parents' house to do some research on our family." He chuckled softly. "I'm afraid my grandfather wasn't too pleased with her when she found there were skeletons to be rattled in our closets."

The gang sat staring silently as Jeff told of his relationship with Lisa, how it had been difficult since he was away at college and had little time for anything other than his studies. In the end he and Lisa had broken up. "I've never met another girl quite like Lisa, though," Jeff ended.

"Great! That's a wrap!" Screech shouted. "Thanks, Jeff. I know this will mean a lot to her."

"I just hope it helps," Jeff said, then noticed the gang. "Oh, hi, guys. How have you been?"

Zack let the girls handle the chitchat with Jeff and pulled Screech aside. "What was all that about?"

"That?" Screech demanded, his voice breaking on the word. "Oh, you mean the videotape. I've been getting all of Lisa's old boyfriends to tell me about the wonderful times they had with her and how much they enjoyed being with her."

"You have?"

"It's all part of my plan," Screech said. "I figured if she knew how much all these guys liked her the way she was, she might start being the way she was again. Not that I don't like her the way she is now, but I'd rather be the one who is really skinny. I'm used to it, and I don't have to starve myself to be this way."

"That's great, Screech," Zack declared, clapping his hand down warmly on his friend's bony shoulder.

"Well, actually I think it's just my metabolism," Screech said.

"I meant what you're doing, getting all these great memories on tape for Lisa," Zack clarified.

"Oh, that. It's nothing. You would have done the same thing, Zack, if you'd had the time," Screech insisted.

"I sure hope it works," Zack said.

"Me, too," Screech said. "But just in case, I have a backup plan as well."

Zack stared at his friend. While his mind had been a total blank, Screech's had been whirling like the wheel in a superhyper hamster's cage.

"In fact," Screech declared, glancing at his wristwatch, "if you follow me, everything should soon be in motion at the Turtle house. Not the Turtle House at the zoo, you realize, but Lisa's home."

"I wouldn't miss it for the world," Zack said. "You know, I'm really proud of you, Screech."

Screech blushed a deep shade of red. But he looked extremely pleased with the praise.

Chapter 13



When she opened the front door, Lisa didn't look all that happy to see the gang standing on her porch. "Whatever you want me to do, I'm far too busy," she insisted. "Thanks for thinking of me, though."

Zack shoved his foot in the doorway and winced when Lisa tried to shut the door on it. "Slater," he ordered with a nod of his head.

Slater put his shoulder to the door, pushing it wide open.

Zack breathed easier.

"We have been thinking about you, Lisa," Jessie said. "And not only us, either."

"Screech has a present for you," Kelly said, and pushed him forward.

"I didn't make it all by myself," he told Lisa.

showing her the videotape. "In fact, I haven't even watched it all myself."

"And none of us has seen it," Slater added. "How about if we all watch it together?"

Lisa folded her arms and tapped her foot impatiently. "Listen, guys, I really appreciate this, but . . ."

Zack jerked his head in Slater's direction again. Between them they picked Lisa up by her arms, one on each side of her, and carried her into the Turtles' family room.

Jessie and Kelly immediately closed the blinds, dimming the light in the room, while Screech powered up both the VCR and the television.

"This won't take long," Zack said soothingly to Lisa as he sat down on the sofa next to her to prevent her from escaping. Slater sat on her other side.

"I don't need a couple of goons to keep me here," Lisa growled.

"We're not goons," Slater declared, and grinned down at her. "We're just making sure we've got the best seats in the house."

Kelly sank to the floor in front of Zack and leaned back against his legs. Jessie perched on the arm of the sofa near Slater.

After cueing up the tape, Screech took the remote control and found a seat on a hassock off to the side. "Ready?" he asked.

"As I'll ever be," Lisa snapped.

Screech pressed the play button. Immediately

the screen filled with the handsome face of Billy Thorndike. He grinned widely at them.

"Hi, Lisa. Remember me? We went to the winter dance together our freshman year. You were really gorgeous, too. I'll never forget how you looked and how I sweated out buying a corsage for you."

He went on to tell a funny story about browbeating his mother and his sisters into helping him find out what color Lisa's dress was and then getting something from the florist that he thought would look good on her. He also remembered how she felt when they slow-danced together.

"I know things didn't work out for us, Lisa, but that doesn't mean I ever forgot you or the great times we had together," Billy finished.

The screen went blank. Kelly sniffed emotionally. Zack fished in his pocket for the handkerchief his mother always insisted he carry. This was the first time it had come in handy. He hoped Kelly would remember how prepared he had been to come to her aid. It wasn't like swinging in on a vine, but still.

Lisa tried to get to her feet. Zack and Slater tagged her back down.

"It's not over yet," Zack insisted.

The TV screen brightened again, this time showing Jeremy Frears, a hurdler on the Bayside track team. Screech had apparently caught him in the middle of practice because Jeremy was wearing short athletic pants, a sweat-stained T-shirt, and running

shoes. When he turned to face the camera, everyone could see that perspiration gleamed on his exposed muscles and dampened his hair so that it curled with devastating results. Lisa sighed softly in appreciation of his appearance.

"Lisa Turtle? Yeah, I dated her for a while," Jeremy told the camera. "Some of the happiest days of my life. She never missed a track meet that I was in. I could always spot her easily in the stands, too, even from center field, because she was the best-looking girl there."

He chuckled slightly. "You know, this one time, when we were up against Valley High, she even ran onto the field and gave me a special cheer. It was kind of embarrassing, but it made me feel great. But that's Lisa. She always makes the guy she's with feel special. She's special. I sorta wish we could get back together, but she's busy being special to other guys now. I guess I can't be greedy." He laughed again. "Well, yes, I could, but I won't be. Don't you change, Lisa. Not one small bit. You're perfect just the way you are."

Jessie jumped to her feet and found a handy box of tissues. She blew her nose and wiped her eyes before the next guy started reminiscing about the time he dated Lisa.

There were a lot of them, too. Zack didn't realize that Lisa had collected so many ex-boyfriends. Only Screech, who made it a point to keep up on every aspect of Lisa's life, had known.

During one of the breaks, Slater got to his feet so that Kelly, Jessie, and Lisa could all sit close together and share the rapidly depleting box of facial tissues. The floor was beginning to look like a mountain snowstorm had swept into the room as they wiped, blew, crumpled, and threw the snowy white used tissues aside.

"I'm hungry," Slater said. "Anybody else want some popcorn?"

"No!" the girls shouted in unison.

"Just asking," Slater mumbled, and headed for the kitchen.

On the tape, Cal Everhart had just finished telling a romantic story about dating Lisa when there was a knock on the door.

"I'll get it," Screech said, jumping to his feet. "You just keep watching the TV."

Zack doubted whether Lisa could have gotten up to play hostess anyway. She was too busy blubbering into a tissue.

Did that mean that the tape was a success? It was hard to tell. Until Lisa started eating again, and eating in the quantities she needed to be healthy, there was no way of knowing. He sure hoped all the romantic gibberish he'd been hearing did the trick. If it didn't, he was back in a spot with Kelly expecting him to come up with a foolproof scheme to knock some sense into Lisa.

He didn't see how anyone could improve on the sentimental tape Screech had made, though. Every

one of the guys featured was a hunk, each one had told a very personal story, and they had all ended by telling Lisa they liked her just the way she was.

Zack barely listened to Jeff Racine's recorded comments. He'd heard them at the Max, after all. He was a bit distracted by the smell of freshly popped corn that was filling the house.

And something else. Something that had his mouth watering. Was that barbecued chicken?

The video ended. Each of the girls took fresh tissues and blew their noses.

"That was beautiful, Screech," Kelly said.

"It certainly was," Jessie agreed, her voice still overly emotional.

Lisa nodded, her nose still buried as she sniffled. "Thank you, Screech. Screech?" She turned to find where he had gone.

So did the rest of the gang.

In the doorway Screech stood blinking his eyes and trying to get control of a lip that tended to tremble. "I'm so glad you liked it, Lisa," he said, his voice breaking more than usual.

"I'm glad you did, too," Billy Thorndike said, standing next to Screech. "I brought you something. I remembered that you loved chicken from Wild Bill Hiccup's Barbecue Corral. Would you share a piece with me?"

Lisa got slowly to her feet. "Oh, Billy," she whispered. "That is so thoughtful."

While her friends watched, Lisa accepted a chicken leg from her former beau and bit into it.

Kelly and Jessie grabbed new tissues. Zack felt rather like taking one himself, he was so glad to see Lisa eating again.

The doorbell pealed once more. Zack answered this time.

"Hi," Jeremy Frears greeted. "I brought Lisa her favorite food. Clam fritters."

Zack pointed toward the back of the house. "Join the party," he said.

Soon other guys arrived, all with offerings of what they remembered as Lisa's favorite food. Not a one had it right, Zack realized. There was nothing that Lisa liked better than éclairs with chocolate frosting. He knew that was true because she'd insisted on them instead of a regular birthday cake ever since he'd known her. Ever since they were five. Golly! That was twelve years!

Maybe he should slip out and buy her some éclairs to go with the barbecued chicken, clam fritters, cheese ravioli, pecan muffins, sweet-and-sour pork, pepperoni pizza, turkey and noodles, and all the other stuff that Lisa's ex-boyfriends had brought by.

Before he could move, the doorbell rang again. Keith Bockman stood there. "Hi, Zack. I didn't know you were one of Lisa's exes," he said.

"I didn't know *you* were," Zack declared in surprise.

"I'm not, either," Keith said with a shy grin. "I want to be her future. I hope she likes éclairs. They're my favorite, especially covered with milk chocolate frosting."

Zack opened the door wide. "You'll be an instant hit," he assured Keith. "Come right on in."

▲ ▼ ▲

A month later everyone was gathered in the main hallway of Bayside High. A white satin ribbon was draped across it, preventing any of the waiting students from charging down the corridor. Mr. Belding stood proudly at the front of the crowd, a pair of scissors in his hand.

"I want to thank everyone for coming today," the principal said. "This is a very special day, not only for me but for everyone who worked so hard to make this day possible. I'd especially like to thank this year's senior class. Without their generous offer to let their photographs be turned into posters, we would never have gotten a start on our goal."

Everyone applauded. The gang all exchanged grins.

"I myself ordered a number of posters, but I'm still waiting for that special shipment of darts I need to go with them," Mr. Belding joked.

The crowd laughed.

"Actually," Jessie whispered in Lisa's ear, "Mr. Belding's order was what made Zack's the best-selling poster by the end of the drive."

Lisa giggled. "I can believe that, girl," she whispered back.

"People, people," Mr. Belding called out to regain the crowd's attention. "As we all know, the poster sales were just the start. None of you would be looking forward to using these brand-new lockers if it hadn't been for the special effort and generosity of one of your fellow students. I think you all know who he is," Mr. Belding continued. "But just in case you don't, let me hand over the ceremonial scissors to Zack Morris. I think you've earned the right to be the one to cut the ribbon and officially open the first locker, Zack."

Zack stepped to the front of the crowd, his hands raised as he acknowledged the cheers of the students.

"I can't believe you managed to get Zack to donate all the money Lani Alcoa paid him to the locker fund," Kelly murmured to Jessie.

"Hey, as his lawyer it was only right that I point out a few loopholes in the contract that applied to Ms. Alcoa as well. If he'd hired a real lawyer and taken the case to court, all that would have happened was that he'd be out a hefty lawyer's fee," Jessie explained. "Fortunately for us, Ms. Alcoa was as legally ignorant as Zack, so she paid up with just the threat of a lawsuit."

"Well, I'm really impressed that you know all this stuff," Kelly declared.

Jessie shrugged. "Actually, I did get a little bit of help from my mom."

"A little?" Lisa repeated. "Girl, you got your

mom to sic the fraud squad on Ms. Alcoa."

"It needed to be done," Jessie said modestly. "I mean, not every kid who believes it when she tells them they've got great modeling potential will have friends like us to rescue them."

"And speaking of friends coming to the rescue," Kelly said, "Screech is an even bigger hero than you are, Jessie."

"He sure is," Jessie agreed. "While the rest of us were fretting ourselves silly, Screech was doing something concrete to help you, Lisa. He really is a hero."

"A superhero," Kelly said.

"I know," Lisa admitted. "I just never pictured Screech being the kind of guy who would slay a girl's personal dragons."

Kelly hugged her tightly. "I'm just glad your dragons are dead and you're back to being your own sweet self."

"Me, too," Lisa said, and grinned at both her friends. "You know, even when I got real crazy about being superthin, there was a part of me that knew it was wrong."

"More than just wrong," Jessie insisted. "It was dangerous, Lisa!"

Lisa blushed slightly. "Yeah, I know. Who knows what would have happened to me if you guys hadn't helped me snap out of it?"

"It wasn't us; it was every guy who's ever had

romantic dreams about you," Kelly said. "So I guess it isn't surprising that Screech turned into your knight in shining armor."

Jessie laughed softly. "If we believe everything he says, no one has ever dreamed about you more than Screech."

Lisa wrinkled her nose. "He isn't exactly how I picture my knight in shining armor, though. But I thanked Screech very prettily for helping me. I let him help me eat all the leftovers my ex-beaux brought over and then handed him a pair of scissors."

"What for?" Jessie asked.

"So that he could cut up every inch of tape on those exercise videos," Lisa explained, and grinned. "The family room was a total wreck by the time he finished, but Mom and Dad didn't seem to mind."

"Ready, Zack?" Mr. Belding asked. "We'll all help you with the countdown. Five—"

"Four," Kelly shouted.

"Three," Jessie added.

"Two," they heard Screech's squeaky voice yell.

"One," Slater said. "Cut the ribbon, preppie."

Zack snipped it through cleanly. The white satin floated gently to the floor, and the students surged forward in Zack's wake and watched as he yanked open the door of a brand-new locker.

Keith Bockman materialized at Lisa's side. "Ready to help me decorate my locker?" he asked, taking her hand.

"You better believe it, sweetie," she said.

Intrigued, Jessie and Kelly followed them.

"This is it," Keith announced, and threw open the door of a shiny, maroon-painted locker. He handed a roll of sticky tape to Lisa and unrolled a poster to hang inside.

It was of Lisa.

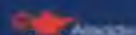
PICTURE PERFECT



Lisa's really gone overboard this time. She's gained two pounds, and she acts as if she's gained twenty. The extra poundage has got to go, she's decided, no matter what it takes!

The gang's not too worried about her, at least not at first. They know that Lisa always pays very close attention to details, especially when it comes to her looks. This is a girl with seventeen different shades of pink lipstick!

But when it becomes clear that Lisa is taking her dieting too far, the gang knows they have to do something. Can they convince her that being skinny isn't all it's cracked up to be? Or has Lisa decided that thin is truly in? Find out when you read *Picture Perfect*, the hot new novel about the "Saved by the Bell" gang.



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